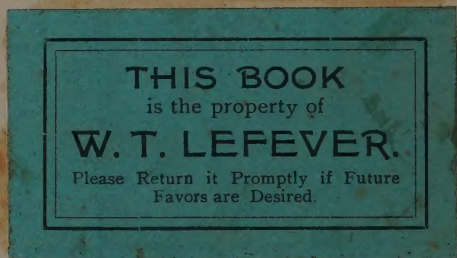


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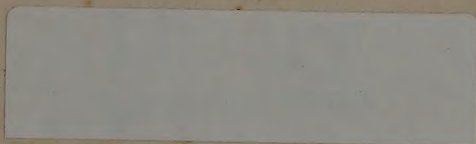
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WORKS

OF

J. FENIMORE COOPER

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS.

THE PRAIRIE.

THE SPY.

ILLUSTRATED WITH WOOD-ENGRAVINGS.

COMPLETE IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOLUME TWO.

11902

NEW YORK:

P. F. COLLIER, PUBLISHER.

1891.

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J. FENIMORE COOPER

THE CASE OF THE THUNDERBOLT

THE THUNDERBOLT

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THE THUNDERBOLT

1855

THE THUNDERBOLT

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS.

INTRODUCTION.

It is believed that the scene of this tale, and most of the information necessary to understand its allusions, are rendered sufficiently obvious to the reader in the text itself, or in the accompanying notes. Still there is so much obscurity in the Indian traditions, and so much confusion in the Indian names, as to render some explanation useful.

Few men exhibit greater diversity, or, if we may so express it, greater antithesis of character, than the native warrior of North America. In war, he is daring, boastful, cunning, ruthless, self-denying, and self-devoted; in peace, just, generous, hospitable, revengeful, superstitious, modest, and commonly chaste. These are qualities, it is true, which do not distinguish all alike; but they are so far the predominating traits of these remarkable people as to be characteristic.

It is generally believed that the Aborigines of the American continent have an Asiatic origin. There are many physical as well as moral facts which corroborate this opinion, and some few that would seem to weigh against it.

The color of the Indian, the writer believes, is peculiar to himself, and while his cheek-bones have a very striking indication of a Tartar origin, his eyes have not. Climate may have had great influence on the former, but it is difficult to see how it can have produced the substantial difference which exists in the latter. The imagery of the Indian, both in his poetry and in his oratory, is Oriental; chastened, and perhaps improved, by the limited

range of practical knowledge. He draws his metaphors from the clouds, the seasons, the birds, the beasts, and the vegetable world. In this, perhaps, he does no more than any other energetic and imaginative race would do, being compelled to set bounds to fancy by experience; but the North American Indian clothes his ideas in a dress which is different from that of the African, and is Oriental in itself. His language has the richness and sententious fullness of the Chinese. He will express a phrase in a word, and he will qualify the meaning of an entire sentence by a syllable; he will even convey different significations by the simplest inflexions of the voice.

Philologists have said that there are but two or three languages, properly speaking, among all the numerous tribes which formerly occupied the country that now composes the United States. They ascribe the known difficulty one people have to understand another to corruptions and dialects. The writer remembers to have been present at an interview between two chiefs of the Great Prairies west of the Mississippi, and when an interpreter was in attendance who spoke both their languages. The warriors appeared to be on the most friendly terms, and seemingly conversed much together; yet, according to the account of the interpreter, each was absolutely ignorant of what the other said. They were of hostile tribes, brought together by the influence of the American Government; and it is worthy of remark, that a common policy led them both to adopt the same subject. They mutually exhorted each other to be of use in the

event of the chances of war throwing either of the parties into the hands of his enemies. Whatever may be the truth, as respects the root and genius of the Indian tongues, it is quite certain they are now so distinct in their words as to possess most of the disadvantages of strange languages; hence much of the embarrassment that has arisen in learning their histories, and most of the uncertainty which exists in their traditions.

Like nations of higher pretensions, the American Indian gives a very different account of his own tribe or race from that which is given by other people. He is much addicted to overestimating his own perfections, and to undervalue those of his rival or his enemy—a trait which may possibly be thought corroborative of the Mosaic account of the creation.

The Whites have assisted greatly in rendering the traditions of the Aborigines more obscure by their own manner of corrupting names. Thus the term used in the title of this book has undergone the changes of Mahicanni, Mohicans and Mohicans; the latter being the word commonly used by the Whites. When it is remembered that the Dutch (who first settled New York), the English and the French, all gave appellations to the tribes that dwelt within the country which is the scene of this story, and that the Indians not only gave different names to their enemies, but frequently to themselves, the cause of the confusion will be understood.

In these pages, Lenni-Lenape, Lenape, Delawares, Wapanachki, and Mohicans, all mean the same people, or tribes of the same stock. The Mengwe, the Maquas, the Mingoes, and the Iroquois, though not all strictly the same, are identified frequently by the speakers, being politically confederated and opposed to those just named. Mingo was a term of peculiar reproach as were Mengwa and Maqua in a less degree.

The Mohicans were the possessors of the country first occupied by the Europeans in this portion of the continent. They were, consequently, the first dispossessed; and the seemingly inevitable fate of all these people, who disappear before the

advances, or it might be termed the inroads of civilization, as the verdure of their native forests fall before the nipping frosts, is represented as having already befallen them. There is sufficient historical truth in the picture to justify the use that has been made of it.

In point of fact, the country which is the scene of the following tale has undergone as little change, since the historical events alluded to had place, as almost any other district of equal extent within the whole limits of the United States. There are fashionable and well-attended watering-places at and near the spring where Hawkeye halted to drink, and roads traverse the forests where he and his friends were compelled to journey without even a path. Glenn's has a large village; and while William Henry, and even a fortress of later date, are only to be traced as ruins, there is another village on the shores of the Horican. But, beyond this, the enterprise and energy of a people who have done so much in other places have done little here. The whole of that wilderness, in which the latter incidents of the legend occurred, is nearly a wilderness still, though the red man has entirely deserted this part of the State. Of all the tribes named in these pages there exists only a few half-civilized beings of the Oneidas, on the reservations of their people in New York. The rest have disappeared, either from the regions in which their fathers dwelt, or altogether from the earth.

There is one point on which we would wish to say a word before closing this preface. Hawkeye calls the *Lac du Saint Sacrement* the "Horican." As we believe this to be an appropriation of the name that has its origin with ourselves, the time has arrived, perhaps, when the fact should be frankly admitted. While writing this book, fully a quarter of a century since, it occurred to us that the French name of this lake was too complicated, the American too commonplace, and the Indian too unpronounceable for either to be used familiarly in a work of fiction. Looking over an ancient map, it was ascertained that a tribe of Indians, called "Les Hori-

cans" by the French, existed in the neighborhood of this beautiful sheet of water. As every word uttered by Natty Bumppo was not to be received as rigid truth, we took the liberty of putting the "Horican" into his mouth as the substitute for "Lake George." The name has appeared to find favor, and all things considered, it may possibly be quite as well to let it stand, instead of going back to the House of Hanover for the appellation of our finest sheet of water. We relieve our conscience by the confession, at all events, leaving it to exercise its authority as it may see fit.

CHAPTER I.

Mine ear is open, and my heart prepared :
The worst is worldly loss thou canst unfold :—
Say, is my kingdom lost ?

—SHAKESPEARE.

It was a feature peculiar to the colonial wars of North America that the toils and dangers of the wilderness were to be encountered before the adverse hosts could meet. A wide and apparently an imperious boundary of forests severed the possessions of the hostile provinces of France and England. The hardy colonist, and the trained European who fought at his side, frequently expended months in struggling against the rapids of the streams, or in effecting the rugged passes of the mountains, in quest of an opportunity to exhibit their courage in a more martial conflict. But, emulating the patience and self-denial of the practiced native warriors, they learned to overcome every difficulty ; and it would seem that, in time, there was no recess of the woods so dark, nor any secret place so lovely, that it might claim exemption from the inroads of those who had pledged their blood to satiate their vengeance, or to uphold the cold and selfish policy of the distant monarchs of Europe.

Perhaps no district throughout the wide extent of the intermediate frontiers can furnish a livelier picture of the cruelty and fierceness of the savage warfare of those periods than the country which lies be-

tween the head waters of the Hudson and the adjacent lakes.

The facilities which Nature had there offered to the march of the combatants were too obvious to be neglected. The lengthened sheet of the Champlain stretched from the frontiers of Canada, deep within the borders of the neighboring province of New York, forming a natural passage across half the distance that the French were compelled to master in order to strike their enemies. Near its southern termination it received the contributions of another lake, whose waters were so limpid as to have been exclusively selected by the Jesuit missionaries to perform the typical purification of baptism, and to obtain for it the title of lake "Du Saint Sacrement." The less zealous English thought they conferred a sufficient honor on its unsullied fountains when they bestowed the name of their reigning prince, the second of the house of Hanover. The two united to rob the untutored possessors of its wooded scenery of their native right to perpetuate its original appellation of "Horican."*

Winding its way among the countless islands, and imbedded in mountains, the "holy lake" extended a dozen leagues still further to the south. With the high plain that there interposed itself to the further passage of the water, commenced a portage of as many miles, which conducted the adventurer to the banks of the Hudson at a point where, with the usual obstructions of the rapids or rifts, as they were then termed in the language of the country, the river became navigable to the tide.

While in the pursuit of their daring plans of annoyance, the restless enterprise of the French even attempted the distant and difficult gorges of the Alleghany, it

* As each nation of the Indians had either its language or its dialect, they usually gave different names to the same places, though nearly all of their appellations were descriptive of the object. Thus a literal translation of the name of this beautiful sheet of water, used by the tribe that dwelt on its banks, would be "The Tail of the Lake." Lake George, as it is vulgarly, and now indeed legally, called, forms a sort of tail to Lake Champlain, when viewed on the map. Hence the name.

may easily be imagined that their proverbial acuteness would not overlook the natural advantages of the district we have just described. It became, emphatically, the bloody arena in which most of the battles for the mastery of the colonies were contested. Forts were erected at the different points that commanded the facilities of the route, and were taken and retaken, razed and rebuilt, as victory alighted on the hostile banners. While the husbandman shrank back from the dangerous passes, within the safer boundaries of the more ancient settlements, armies larger than those that had often disposed of the scepters of the mother countries were seen to bury themselves in these forests, whence they rarely returned but in skeleton bands that were haggard with care or dejected by defeat. Though the arts of peace were unknown to this fatal region, its forests were alive with men; its shades and glens rang with the sounds of martial music, and the echo of its mountains threw back the laugh, or repeated the wanton cry, of many a gallant and reckless youth, as he hurried by them in the noontide of his spirits, to slumber in a long night of forgetfulness.

It was in this scene of strife and bloodshed that the incidents we shall attempt to relate occurred, during the third year of the war which England and France last waged for the possession of a country that neither was destined to retain.

The imbecility of her military leaders abroad, and the fatal want of energy in her counsels at home, had lowered the character of Great Britain from the proud elevation on which it had been placed, by the talents and enterprise of her former warriors and statesmen. No longer dreaded by her enemies, her servants were fast losing the confidence of self-respect. In this mortifying abasement, the colonists, though innocent of her imbecility, and too humble to be the agents of her blunders, were but the natural participators. They had recently seen a chosen army from that country which, reverencing as a mother, they had blindly believed invincible—an army led by a chief who had been selected from a crowd

of trained warriors for his rare military endowments, disgracefully routed by a handful of French and Indians, and only saved from annihilation by the coolness and spirit of a Virginian boy, whose riper fame has since diffused itself with the steady influence of moral truth to the uttermost confines of Christendom.* A wide frontier had been laid naked by this unexpected disaster, and more substantial evils were preceded by a thousand fanciful and imaginary dangers. The alarmed colonists believed that the yells of the savages mingled with every fitful gust of wind that issued from the interminable forests of the west. The terrific character of their merciless enemies increased immeasurably the natural horrors of warfare. Numberless recent massacres were still vivid in their recollections; nor was there any ear in the provinces so deaf as not to have drunk in with avidity the narrative of some fearful tale of midnight murder, in which the natives of the forests were the principal and barbarous actors. As the credulous and excited traveler related the hazardous chances of the wilderness, the blood of the timid curdled with terror, and mothers cast anxious glances even at those children which slumbered within the security of the largest towns. In short, the magnifying influence of fear began to set at naught the calculations of reason, and to render those who should have remembered their manhood the slaves of the basest of passions. Even the most confident and the stoutest hearts began to think the issue of the contest was becoming doubtful; and that abject class was hourly increasing in numbers who thought they foresaw all

* Washington: who, after uselessly admonishing the European general of the danger into which he was heedlessly running, saved the remnants of the British army on this occasion by his decision and courage. The reputation earned by Washington in this battle was the principal cause of his being selected to command the American armies at a later day. It is a circumstance worthy of observation that while all America rang with his well-merited reputation, his name does not occur in any European account of the battle; at least, the author has searched for it without success. In this manner does the Mother Country absorb even the fame, under that system of rule.

the possessions of the English crown in America subdued by their Christian foes, or laid waste by the inroads of their relentless allies.

When, therefore, intelligence was received at the fort which covered the southern termination of the portage between the Hudson and the lakes that Montcalm had been seen moving up the Champlain with an army "numerous as the leaves on the trees," its truth was admitted with more of the craven reluctance of fear than with the stern joy that a warrior should feel in finding an enemy within reach of his blow. The news had been brought, towards the decline of a day in midsummer, by an Indian runner, who also bore an urgent request from Munro, the commander of a work on the shore of the "holy lake," for a speedy and powerful re-enforcement. It has already been mentioned that the distance between these two posts was less than five leagues. The rude path, which originally formed their line of communication, had been widened for the passage of wagons; so that the distance which had been traveled by the son of the forest in two hours might easily be effected by a detachment of troops, with their necessary baggage, between the rising and setting of a summer sun. The loyal servants of the British crown had given to one of these forest fastnesses the name of William Henry, and to the other that of Fort Edward; calling each after a favorite prince of the reigning family. The veteran Scotchman just named held the first, with a regiment of regulars and a few provincials; a force really by far too small to make head against the formidable power that Montcalm was leading to the foot of his earthen mounds. At the latter, however, lay General Webb, who commanded the armies of the king in the northern provinces, with a body of more than five thousand men. By uniting the several detachments of his command, this officer might have arrayed nearly double that number of combatants against the enterprising Frenchman who had ventured so far from his re-enforcements with an army but little superior in numbers.

But under the influence of their degraded fortunes, both officers and men appeared better disposed to await the approach of their formidable antagonists, within their works, than to resist the progress of their march, by emulating the successful example of the French at Fort du Quesne, and striking a blow on their advance.

After the first surprise of the intelligence had a little abated, a rumor was spread through the intrenched camp, which stretched along the margin of the Hudson, forming a chain of outworks to the body of the fort itself, that a chosen detachment of fifteen hundred men was to depart, with the dawn, for William Henry, the post at the northern extremity of the portage. That which at first was only rumor soon became certainty, as orders passed from the quarters of the commander-in-chief to the several corps he had selected for this service, to prepare for their speedy departure. All doubts as to the intention of Webb now vanished, and an hour or two of hurried footsteps and anxious faces succeeded. The novice in the military art flew from point to point, retarding his own preparation by the excess of his violent and somewhat distempered zeal; while the more practiced veteran made his arrangements with a deliberation that scorned every appearance of haste; though his sober lineaments and anxious eye sufficiently betrayed that he had no very strong professional relish for the, as yet, untried and dreaded warfare of the wilderness. At length the sun set in a flood of glory behind the distant western hills, and as darkness drew its veil around the secluded spot the sounds of preparation diminished; the last light finally disappeared from the log cabin of some officer; the trees cast their deeper shadows over the mounds and the rippling stream, and a silence soon pervaded the camp as deep as that which reigned in the vast forest by which it was environed.

According to the orders of the preceding night, the heavy sleep of the army was broken by the rolling of the warning drums, whose rattling echoes were heard

issuing, on the damp morning air, out of every vista of the woods, just as day began to draw the shaggy outlines of some tall pines of the vicinity, on the opening brightness of a soft and cloudless eastern sky. In an instant the whole camp was in motion; the meanest soldier arousing from his lair to witness the departure of his comrades, and to share in the excitement and incidents of the hour. The simple array of the chosen band was soon completed. While the regular and trained hirelings of the king marched with haughtiness to the right of the line, the less pretending colonists took their humble position on its left with a docility that long practice had rendered easy. The scouts departed; strong guards preceded and followed the lumbering vehicles that bore the baggage; and before the gray light of the morning was mellowed by the rays of the sun the main body of the combatants wheeled into column, and left the encampment with a show of high military bearing that served to drown the slumbering apprehensions of many a novice who was now about to make his first essay in arms. While in view of their admiring comrades the same proud front and ordered array was observed, until, the notes of their fifes growing fainter in distance, the forest at length appeared to swallow up the living mass which had slowly entered its bosom.

The deepest sounds of the retiring and invisible column had ceased to be borne on the breeze to the listeners, and the latest straggler had already disappeared in pursuit; but there still remained the signs of another departure before a log cabin of unusual size and accommodations, in front of which those sentinels paced their rounds who were known to guard the person of the English general. At this spot were gathered some half-dozen horses, caparisoned in a manner which showed that two, at least, were destined to bear the persons of females of a rank that it was not usual to meet so far in the wilds of the country. A third wore the trappings and arms of an officer of the staff; while the rest, from the plainness of the housings and the traveling mails with which they were encumbered, were evidently fitted for the recep-

tion of as many menials, who were, seemingly, already awaiting the pleasure of those they served. At a respectful distance from this unusual show were gathered divers groups of curious idlers; some admiring the blood and bone of the high-mettled military charger, and others gazing at the preparations with the dull wonder of vulgar curiosity. There was one man, however, who, by his countenance and actions, formed a marked exception to those who composed the latter class of spectators, being neither idle nor seemingly very ignorant.

The person of this individual was to the last degree ungainly without being in any particular manner deformed. He had all the bones and joints of other men without any of their proportions. Erect, his stature surpassed that of his fellows; though seated, he appeared reduced within the ordinary limits of the race. The same contrariety in his members seemed to exist throughout the whole man. His head was large, his shoulders narrow, his arms long and dangling, while his hands were small, if not delicate. His legs and thighs were thin nearly to emaciation, but of extraordinary length; and his knees would have been considered tremendous had they not been outdone by the broader foundations on which this false superstructure of blended human orders was so profanely reared. The ill-assorted and injudicious attire of the individual only served to render his awkwardness more conspicuous. A sky-blue coat, with short and broad skirts, and low cape, exposed a long, thin neck and longer and thinner legs to the worst animadversions of the evil disposed. His nether garment was of yellow nankeen, closely fitted to the shape, and tied at his bunches of knees by large knots of white ribbon, a good deal sullied by use. Clouted cotton stockings and shoes, on one of the latter of which was a plated-spur, completed the costume of the lower extremity of this figure, no curve or angle of which was concealed, but on the other hand, studiously exhibited, through the vanity or simplicity of its owner. From beneath the flap of an enormous pocket of a soiled vest of em-

bossed silk, heavily ornamented with tarnished silver lace, projected an instrument which, from being seen in such martial company, might have been easily mistaken for some mischievous and unknown implement of war. Small as it was, this uncommon engine had excited the curiosity of most of the Europeans in the camp, though several of the provincials were seen to handle it not only without fear, but with the utmost familiarity. A large, civil cocked hat, like those worn by clergymen within the last thirty years, surmounted the whole, furnishing dignity to a good-natured and somewhat vacant countenance that apparently needed such artificial aid to support the gravity of some high and extraordinary trust.

While the common herd stood aloof, in deference to the quarters of Webb, the figure we have described stalked into the center of the domestics, freely expressing his censures or commendations on the merits of the horses, as by chance they displeased or satisfied his judgment.

"This beast, I rather conclude, friend, is not of home raising, but is from foreign lands, or perhaps from the little island itself over the blue water?" he said, in a voice as remarkable for the softness and sweetness of its tones as was his person for its rare proportions: "I may speak of these things and be no braggart, for I have been down at both havens; that which is situate at the mouth of Thames and is named after the capital of Old England, and that which is called 'Haven,' with the addition of the word 'New;' and have seen the snows and brigantines collecting their droves, like the gathering to the ark, being outward bound to the Island of Jamaica for the purpose of barter and traffic in four-footed animals; but never before have I beheld a beast which verified the true scripture war-horse like this, 'He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting.' It would seem that the stock of the horse of Israel has descended to our own time, would it not, friend?"

Receiving no reply to this extraordinary appeal, which, in truth, as it was delivered with the vigor of full and sonorous tones, merited some sort of notice, he who had thus sung forth the language of the holy book turned to the silent figure to whom he had unwittingly addressed himself and found a new and more powerful subject of admiration in the object that encountered his gaze. His eyes fell on the still, upright and rigid form of the "Indian runner," who had borne to the camp the unwelcome tidings of the preceding evening. Although in a state of perfect repose, and apparently disregarding with characteristic stoicism the excitement and bustle around him, there was a sullen fierceness mingled with the quiet of the savage that was likely to arrest the attention of much more experienced eyes than those which now scanned him in unconcealed amazement. The native bore both the tomahawk and knife of his tribe, and yet his appearance was not altogether that of a warrior. On the contrary, there was an air of neglect about his person, like that which might have proceeded from great and recent exertion, which he had not yet found leisure to repair. The colors of the war-paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect which had been thus produced by chance. His eye alone, which glistened like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wildness. For a single instant his searching and yet wary glance met the wondering look of the other, and then, changing its direction, partly in cunning and partly in disdain, it remained fixed, as if penetrating the distant air.

It is impossible to say what unlooked-for remark this short and silent communication, between two such singular men, might have elicited from the white man, had not his active curiosity been again drawn to other objects. A general movement amongst the domestics, and a low sound of gentle voices, announced the approach of those whose presence alone was wanted to enable the cavalcade to move.

The simple admirer of the war-horse instantly fell back to a low, gaunt, switch-tailed mare, that was unconsciously glean- ing the faded herbage of the camp nigh by ; where, leaning with one elbow on the blanket that concealed an apology for a saddle, he became a spectator of the de- parture, while a foal was quietly making its morning repast on the opposite side of the same animal.

A young man, in the dress of an officer, conducted to their steeds two females, who, as it was apparent by their dresses, were prepared to encounter the fatigues of a journey in the woods. One, and she was the most juvenile in her appearance, though both were young, permitted glimpses of her dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright blue eyes, to be caught as she artlessly suffered the morn- ing air to blow aside the green veil which descended low from her beaver. The flush which still lingered above the pines in the western sky was not more bright nor deli- cate than the bloom on her cheek ; nor was the opening day more cheering than the animated smile which she bestowed on the youth as he assisted her into the sad- dle. The other, who appeared to share equally in the attentions of the young officer, concealed her charms from the gaze of the soldiery with a care that seemed better fitted to the experience of four or five additional years. It could be seen, however, that her person, though molded with the same exquisite propor- tions, of which none of the graces were lost by the traveling dress she wore, was rather fuller and more mature than that of her companion.

No sooner were these females seated than their attendant sprang lightly into the saddle of the war-horse, when the whole three bowed to Webb, who in courtesy awaited their parting on the threshold of his cabin, and turning their horses' heads, they proceeded at a slow amble, followed by their train, towards the northern entrance of the encampment. As they traversed that short distance not a voice was heard amongst them ; but a slight exclamation proceeded from the younger of the females as the Indian run-

ner glided by her, unexpectedly, and led the way along the military road in her front. Though this sudden and startling movement of the Indian produced no sound from the other, in the surprise her veil also was allowed to open its folds, and be- trayed an indescribable look of pity, admi- ration and horror as her dark eye followed the easy motions of the savage. The tresses of this lady were shining and black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the color of the rich blood that seemed ready to burst its bounds. And yet there was neither coarseness nor want of shad- owing in a countenance that was exquis- itely regular and dignified and surpass- ingly beautiful. She smiled, as if in pity at her own momentary forgetfulness, dis- covering by the act a row of teeth that would have shamed the purest ivory ; when, replacing the veil, she bowed her face and rode in silence, like one whose thoughts were abstracted from the scene around her.

CHAPTER II.

Sola, sola, wo ha, ho, sola !

—SHAKESPEARE.

WHILE one of the lovely beings we have so cursorily presented to the reader was thus lost in thought the other quickly re- covered from the alarm which induced the exclamation, and, laughing at her own weakness, she inquired of the youth who rode by her side—

“Are such specters frequent in the woods, Heyward ; or is this sight an es- pecial entertainment ordered on our be- half ? If the latter, gratitude must close our mouths ; but if the former, both Cora and I shall have need to draw largely on the stock of hereditary courage which we boast, even before we are made to en- counter the redoubtable Montcalm.”

“Yon Indian is a ‘runner’ of the army ; and, after the fashion of his people, he may be accounted a hero,” returned the officer. “He has volunteered to guide us to the lake, by a path but little known,

sooner than if we followed the tardy movements of the column; and, by consequence, more agreeably."

"I like him not," said the lady, shuddering, partly in assumed, yet more in real terror. "You know him, Duncan, or you would not trust yourself so freely to his keeping?"

"Say, rather, Alice, that I would not trust you. I do know him, or he would not have my confidence, and least of all at this moment. He is said to be a Canadian, too; and yet he served with our friends the Mohawks, who, as you know, are one of the six allied nations.* He was brought amongst us, as I have heard, by some strange accident in which your father was interested, and in which the savage was rigidly dealt by; but I forget the idle tale; it is enough that he is now our friend."

"If he has been my father's enemy I like him still less!" exclaimed the now really anxious girl. "Will you not speak to him, Major Heyward, that I may hear his tones? Foolish though it may be, you have often heard me avow my faith in the tones of the human voice!"

"It would be in vain; and answered most probably by an ejaculation. Though he may understand it, he affects, like most of his people, to be ignorant of the English; and least of all will he condescend to speak it now that the war demands the utmost exercise of his dignity. But he stops; the private path by which we are to journey is, doubtless, at hand."

The conjecture of Major Heyward was

* There existed for a long time a confederation among the Indian tribes which occupied the north-western part of the colony of New York which was at first known as the "Five Nations." At a later day it admitted another tribe, when the appellation was changed to that of the "Six Nations." The original confederation consisted of the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Senecas, the Cayugas, and the Onondagoes. The sixth tribe was the Tuscaroras. There are remnants of all these people still living on lands secured to them by the State; but they are daily disappearing, either by deaths or by removals to scenes more congenial to their habits. In a short time there will be no remains of these extraordinary people, in those regions in which they dwelt for centuries, but their names. The State of New York has counties named after all of them but the Mohawks and the Tuscaroras. The second river of that State is called the Mohawk.

true. When they reached the spot where the Indian stood, pointing into the thicket that fringed the military road, a narrow and blind path, which might, with some little inconvenience, receive one person at a time, became visible.

"Here, then, lies our way," said the young man in a low voice. "Manifest no distrust, or you may invite the danger you appear to apprehend."

"Cora, what think you?" asked the reluctant fair one. "If we journey with the troops, though we may find their presence irksome, shall we not feel better assurance of our safety?"

"Being little accustomed to the practices of the savages, Alice, you mistake the place of real danger," said Heyward. "If enemies have reached the portage at all, a thing by no means probable, as our scouts are abroad, they will surely be found skirting the columns, where scalps abound the most. The route of the detachment is known, while ours, having been determined within the hour, must still be secret."

"Should we distrust the man because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark?" coldly asked Cora.

Alice hesitated no longer, but giving her Narraganset* a smart cut of the whip, she was the first to dash aside the slight branches of the bushes and to follow the runner along the dark and tangled pathway. The young man regarded the last speaker in open admiration, and even permitted her fairer, though certainly not more beautiful companion, to proceed unattended, while he sedulously opened the way himself for the passage of her who had been called Cora. It would seem that

* In the State of Rhode Island there is a bay called Narraganset, so named after a powerful tribe of Indians which formerly dwelt on its banks. Accident, or one of those unaccountable freaks which Nature sometimes plays in the animal world, gave rise to a breed of horses which were once well known in America by the name of the Narragansets. They were small, commonly of the color called sorrel in America, and distinguished by their habit of pacing. Horses of this race were, and are still, in much request as saddle horses, on account of their hardness and the ease of their movements. As they were also sure of foot, the Narragansets were greatly sought for by females who were obliged to travel over the roots and holes in the "new countries."

the domestics had been previously instructed, for instead of penetrating the thicket, they followed the route of the column; a measure which Heyward stated had been dictated by the sagacity of their guide, in order to diminish the marks of their trail, if, haply, the Canadian savages should be lurking so far in advance of their army. For many minutes the intricacy of the route admitted of no further dialogue; after which they emerged from the broad border of underbrush which grew along the line of the highway and entered under the high but dark arches of the forest. Here their progress was less interrupted, and the instant the guide perceived that the females could command their steeds, he moved on at a pace between a trot and a walk, and at a rate which kept the sure-footed and peculiar animals they rode at a fast yet easy amble. The youth had turned to speak to the dark-eyed Cora, when the distant sounds of horses' hoofs clattering over the roots of the broken way in his rear caused him to check his charger; and as his companions drew their reins at the same instant, the whole party came to a halt, in order to obtain an explanation of the unlooked-for interruption.

In a few moments a colt was seen gliding, like a fallow deer, amongst the straight trunks of the pines, and in another instant the person of the ungainly man described in the preceding chapter came into view, with as much rapidity as he could excite his meager beast to endure without coming to an open rupture. Until now this personage had escaped the observation of the travelers. If he possessed the power to arrest any wandering eye when exhibiting the glories of his altitude on foot, his equestrian graces were still more likely to attract attention. Notwithstanding a constant application of his one-armed heel to the flanks of the mare, the most confirmed gait that he could establish was a Canterbury gallop with the hind legs, in which those more forward assisted for doubtful moments, though generally content to maintain a loping trot. Perhaps the rapidity of the changes from one of these paces to the other cre-

ated an optical illusion, which might thus magnify the powers of the beast; for it is certain that Heyward, who possessed a true eye for the merits of a horse, was unable, with his utmost ingenuity, to decide by what sort of movements his pursuer worked his sinuous way on his footsteps with such persevering hardihood.

The industry and movement of the rider were not less remarkable than those of the ridden. At each change in the evolutions of the latter the former raised his tall person in the stirrups; producing in this manner, by the undue elongation of his legs, such sudden growths and diminishings of the stature as baffled every conjecture that might be made as to his dimensions. If to this be added the fact that, in consequence of the *ex parte* application of the spur, one side of the mare appeared to journey faster than the other; and that the aggrieved flank was resolutely indicated by unremitted flourishes of a bushy tail, we finish the picture of both horse and man.

The frown which had gathered around the handsome, open and manly brow of Heyward gradually relaxed, and his lips curled into a slight smile as he regarded the stranger. Alice made no very powerful effort to control her merriment; and even the dark, thoughtful eye of Cora lighted with a humor that, it would seem, the habit rather than the nature of its mistress repressed.

"Seek you any here?" demanded Heyward, when the other had arrived sufficiently nigh to abate his speed; "I trust you are no messenger of evil tidings."

"Even so," replied the stranger, making diligent use of his triangular castor to produce a circulation in the close air of the woods, and leaving his hearers in doubt to which of the young man's questions he responded; when, however, he had cooled his face, and recovered his breath, he continued: "I hear you are riding to William Henry; as I am journeying thitherward myself, I concluded good company would seem consistent to the wishes of both parties."

"You appear to possess the privilege of a casting vote," returned Heyward;

"we are three, whilst you have consulted no one but yourself."

"Even so. The first point to be obtained is to know one's own mind. Once sure of that—and where women are concerned it is not easy—the next is, to act up to the decision. I have endeavored to do both, and here I am."

"If you journey to the lake, you have mistaken the route," said Heyward, haughtily; "the highway thither is at least half a mile behind you."

"Even so," returned the stranger, nothing daunted by this cold reception; "I have tarried at 'Edward' a week, and I should be dumb not to have inquired the road I was to journey; and if dumb there would be an end to my calling." After simpering in a small way, like one whose modesty prohibited a more open expression of his admiration of a witticism that was perfectly unintelligible to his hearers, he continued, "It is not prudent for any one of my profession to be too familiar with those he has to instruct; for which reason I follow not the line of the army; besides which, I conclude that a gentleman of your character has the best judgment in matters of wayfaring; I have therefore decided to join company, in order that the ride may be made agreeable, and partake of social communion."

"A most arbitrary if not a hasty decision!" exclaimed Heyward, undecided whether to give vent to his growing anger, or to laugh in the other's face. "But you speak of instruction, and of a profession; are you an adjunct to the provincial corps, as a master of the noble science of defense and offense; or, perhaps, you are one who draws lines and angles, under the pretense of expounding the mathematics?"

The stranger regarded his interrogator a moment in wonder; and then, losing every mark of self-satisfaction in an expression of solemn humility, he answered:

"Of offense, I hope there is none to either party; of defense, I make none—by God's good mercy, having committed no palpable sin since last entreating his pardoning grace. I understand not your allusions about lines and angles; and I

leave expounding to those who have been called and set apart for that holy office. I lay claim to no higher gift than a small insight into the glorious art of petitioning and thanksgiving, as practiced in psalmody."

"The man is, most manifestly, a disciple of Apollo," cried the amused Alice, "and I take him under my own especial protection. Nay, throw aside that frown, Heyward, and in pity to my longing ears suffer him to journey in our train. Besides," she added, in a low and hurried voice, casting a glance at the distant Cora, who slowly followed the footsteps of their silent but sullen guide, "it may be a friend added to our strength in time of need."

"Think you, Alice, that I would trust those I love by this secret path did I imagine such need could happen?"

"Nay, nay, I think not of it now; but this strange man amuses me; and if he 'hath music in his soul' let us not churlishly reject his company." She pointed persuasively along the path with her riding-whip, while their eyes met in a look which the young man lingered a moment to prolong; then, yielding to her gentle influence, he clapped his spurs into his charger, and in a few bounds was again at the side of Cora.

"I am glad to encounter thee, friend," continued the maiden, waving her hand to the stranger to proceed as she urged her Narraganset to renew its amble. "Partial relatives have almost persuaded me that I am not entirely worthless in a duet myself; and we may enliven our wayfaring by indulging in our favorite pursuit. It might be of signal advantage to one ignorant as I to hear the opinions and experience of a master in the art."

"It is refreshing both to the spirits and to the body to indulge in psalmody in befitting seasons," returned the master of song, unhesitatingly complying with her intimation to follow, "and nothing would relieve the mind more than such a consoling communion. But four parts are altogether necessary to the perfection of melody. You have all the manifestations of a soft and rich treble; I can, by especial aid,

carry a full tenor to the highest letter ; but we lack counter and bass ! Yon officer of the king, who hesitated to admit me to his company, might fill the latter, if one may judge from the intonations of his voice in common dialogue."

"Judge not too rashly from hasty and deceptive appearances," said the lady, smiling ; "though Major Heyward can assume such deep notes on occasion, believe me, his natural tones are better fitted for a mellow tenor than the bass you heard."

"Is he, then, much practiced in the art of psalmody ?" demanded her simple companion.

Alice felt disposed to laugh, though she succeeded in suppressing her merriment ere she answered—

"I apprehend that he is rather addicted to profane song. The chances of a soldier's life are but little fitted for the encouragement of more sober inclinations."

"Man's voice is given to him, like his other talents, to be used, and not to be abused. None can say they have ever known me neglect my gifts ! I am thankful that, though my boyhood may be said to have been set apart, like the youth of the royal David, for the purposes of music, no syllable of rude verse has ever profaned my lips."

"You have, then, limited your efforts to sacred song ?"

"Even so. As the psalms of David exceed all other language, so does the psalmody that has been fitted to them by the divines and sages of the land surpass all vain poetry. Happily, I may say that I utter nothing but the thoughts and the wishes of the King of Israel himself ; for though the times may call for some slight changes, yet does this version which we use in the colonies of New England so much exceed all other versions that, by its richness, its exactness and its spiritual sympathy, it approacheth, as near as may be, to the great work of the inspired writer. I never abide in any place, sleeping or waking, without an example of this gifted work. 'Tis the sixth-and-twentieth edition, promulgated at Boston, Anno Domini 1744, and is entitled 'The Psalms,

Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testaments ; faithfully translated into English Meter for the Use, Edification and Comfort of the Saints in Public and Private, especially in New England.'"

During this eulogium on the rare production of his native poets, the stranger had drawn the book from his pocket, and fitting a pair of iron-rimmed spectacles to his nose, opened the volume with a care and veneration suited to its sacred purposes. Then, without circumlocution or apology, first pronouncing the word "Standish," and placing the unknown engine, already described, to his mouth, from which he drew a high, shrill sound, that was followed by an octave below from his own voice, he commenced singing the following words in full, sweet and melodious tones, that set the music, the poetry and even the uneasy motion of his ill-trained beast at defiance :

"How good it is, O see,
And how it pleaseth well,
Together, e'en in unity,
For brethren so to dwell.
It's like the choice ointment,
From the head to th' beard did go :
Down Aaron's beard, that downward went,
His garment's skirts unto."

The delivery of these skillful rhymes was accompanied, on the part of the stranger, by a regular rise and fall of his right hand, which terminated at the descent by suffering the fingers to dwell a moment on the leaves of the little volume ; and on the ascent by such a flourish of the member as none but the initiated may ever hope to imitate. It would seem that long practice had rendered this manual accompaniment necessary ; for it did not cease until the preposition which the poet had selected for the close of his verse had been duly delivered like a word of two syllables.

Such an innovation on the silence and retirement of the forest could not fail to enlist the ears of those who journeyed at so short a distance in advance. The Indian muttered a few words in broken English to Heyward, who, in his turn, spoke to the stranger ; at once interrupting, and, for the time, closing his musical efforts.

"Though we are not in danger, common prudence would teach us to journey through this wilderness in as quiet a manner as possible. You will, then, pardon me, Alice, should I diminish your enjoyments by requesting this gentleman to postpone his chant until a safer opportunity."

"You will diminish them, indeed," returned the arch girl; "for never did I hear a more unworthy conjunction of execution and language than that to which I have been listening; and I was far gone in a learned inquiry in the causes of such an unfitness between sound and sense, when you broke the charm of my musings by that bass of yours, Duncan!"

"I know not what you call my bass," said Heyward, piqued at her remark, "but I know that your safety, and that of Cora, is far dearer to me than could be any orchestra of Handel's music." He paused and turned his head quickly towards a thicket, and then bent his eyes suspiciously on their guide, who continued his steady pace in undisturbed gravity. The young man smiled to himself, for he believed he had mistaken some shining berry of the woods for the glistening eyeballs of a prowling savage, and he rode forward, continuing the conversation which had been interrupted by the passing thought.

Major Heyward was mistaken only in suffering his youthful and generous pride to suppress his active watchfulness. The cavalcade had not long passed before the branches of the bushes that formed the thicket were cautiously moved asunder, and a human visage, as fiercely wild as savage art and unbridled passions could make it, peered out on the retiring footsteps of the travelers. A gleam of exultation shot across the darkly-painted lineaments of the inhabitant of the forest as he traced the route of his intended victims, who rode unconsciously onward; the light and graceful forms of the females waving among the trees in the curvatures of their path, followed at each bend by the manly figure of Heyward, until finally the shapeless person of the singing-master was concealed behind the numberless trunks of

trees that rose, in dark lines, in the intermediate space.

CHAPTER III.

Before these fields were shorn and till'd

Full to the brim our rivers flow'd;

The melody of waters fill'd

The fresh and boundless wood;

And torrents dash'd, and rivulets play'd,

And fountains spouted in the shade.

—BRYANT.

LEAVING the unsuspecting Heyward and his confiding companions to penetrate still deeper into a forest that contained such treacherous inmates, we must use an author's privilege, and shift the scene a few miles to the westward of the place where we have last seen them.

On that day two men were lingering on the banks of a small but rapid stream, within an hour's journey of the encampment of Webb, like those who awaited the appearance of an absent person or the approach of some expected event. The vast canopy of woods spread itself to the margin of the river overhanging the water and shadowing its dark current with a deeper hue. The rays of the sun were beginning to grow less fierce, and the intense heat of the day was lessened as the cooler vapors of the springs and fountains rose above their leafy beds and rested in the atmosphere. Still that breathing silence which marks the drowsy sultriness of an American landscape in July pervaded the secluded spot, interrupted only by the low voices of the men, the occasional and lazy tap of a woodpecker, the discordant cry of some gaudy jay, or a swelling on the ear from the dull roar of a distant waterfall.

These feeble and broken sounds were, however, too familiar to the foresters to draw their attention from the more interesting matter of their dialogue. While one of these loiterers showed the red skin and wild accouterments of a native of the woods, the other exhibited, through the mask of his rude and nearly savage equipments, the brighter, though sun-burnt and long-faded complexion of one who might claim descent from a European

parentage. The former was seated on the end of a mossy log, in a posture that permitted him to heighten the effect of his earnest language by the calm but expressive gestures of an Indian engaged in debate. His body, which was nearly naked, presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in intermingled colors of white and black. His closely-shaved head, on which no other hair than the well-known and chivalrous scalping tuft* was preserved, was without ornament of any kind, with the exception of a solitary eagle's plume that crossed his crown and depended over the left shoulder. A tomahawk and scalping-knife of English manufacture were in his girdle, while a short military rifle, of that sort with which the policy of the whites armed their savage allies, lay carelessly across his bare and sinewy knee. The expanded chest, full formed limbs and grave countenance of this warrior would denote that he had reached the vigor of his days, though no symptoms of decay appeared to have yet weakened his manhood.

The frame of the white man, judging by such parts as were not concealed by his clothes, was like that of one who had known hardships and exertion from his earliest youth. His person, though muscular, was rather attenuated than full; but every nerve and muscle appeared strung and indurated by unremitted exposure and toil. He wore a hunting-shirt of forest-green, fringed with faded yellow,† and a summer cap of skins which had been shorn of their fur. He also bore a knife

in a girdle of wampum, like that which confined the scanty garments of the Indian, but no tomahawk. His moccasins were ornamented after the gay fashion of the natives, while the only part of his under dress which appeared below the hunting frock was a pair of buckskin leggings that laced at the sides, and which were gartered above the knees with the sinews of a deer. A pouch and horn completed his personal accouterments, though a rifle of great length,* which the theory of the more ingenious whites had taught them was the most dangerous of all fire-arms, leaned against a neighboring sapling. The eye of the hunter, or scout, whichever he might be, was small, quick, keen, and restless, roving while he spoke on every side of him, as if in quest of game, or distrusting the sudden approach of some lurking enemy. Notwithstanding these symptoms of habitual suspicion, his countenance was not only without guile, but at the moment at which he is introduced it was charged with an expression of sturdy honesty.

"Even your traditions make the case in my favor, Chingachgook," he said, speaking in the tongue which was known to all the natives who formerly inhabited the country between the Hudson and the Potomac, and of which we shall give a free translation for the benefit of the reader; endeavoring, at the same time, to preserve some of the peculiarities, both of the individual and of the language. "Your fathers came from the setting sun, crossed the big river,‡ fought the people of the country, and took the land; and mine came from the red sky of the morning, over the salt lake, and did their work much after the fashion that had been set them by yours; then let God judge the matter between us, and friends spare their words!"

"My fathers fought with the naked red

* The North American warrior caused the hair to be plucked from his whole body; a small tuft only was left on the crown of his head, in order that his enemy might avail himself of it in wrenching off the scalp in the event of his fall. The scalp was the only admissible trophy of victory. Thus it was deemed more important to obtain the scalp than to kill the man. Some tribes lay great stress on the honor of striking a dead body. These practices have nearly disappeared among the Indians of the Atlantic States.

† The hunting-shirt is a picturesque smock-frock, being shorter, and ornamented with fringes and tassels. The colors are intended to imitate the hues of the wood, with a view to concealment. Many corps of American riflemen have been thus attired; and the dress is one of the most striking of modern times. The hunting-shirt is frequently white.

* The rifle of the army is short; that of the hunter is always long.

† The Mississippi. The scout alludes to a tradition which is very popular among the tribes of the Atlantic States. Evidence of their Asiatic origin is deduced from the circumstances, though great uncertainty hangs over the whole history of the Indians.



"Then you must have lost your eyesight afore losing your way, for the road across the portage is cut to a good two rods, and is as grand a path, I calculate, as any that runs into London or even before the palace of the king himself."—*Last of the Mohicans.*

man!" returned the Indian, sternly, in the same language. "Is there no difference, Hawkeye, between the stone-headed arrow of the warrior and the leaden bullet with which you kill?"

"There is reason in an Indian, though Nature has made him with a red skin!" said the white man, shaking his head like one on whom such an appeal to his justice was not thrown away. For a moment he appeared to be conscious of having the worst of the argument, then rallying again, he answered the objection of his antagonist in the best manner his limited information would allow: "I am no scholar, and I care not who knows it; but, judging from what I have seen at deer chases and squirrel hunts of the sparks below, I should think a rifle in the hands of their grandfathers was not so dangerous as a hickory bow and a good flint-head might be, if drawn with Indian judgment and sent by an Indian eye."

"You have the story told by your fathers," returned the other, coldly waving his hand. "What say your old men? do they tell the young warriors that the pale-faces met the red men, painted for war and armed with the stone hatchet and wooden gun?"

"I am not a prejudiced man, nor one who vaunts himself on his natural privileges, though the worst enemy I have on earth, and he is an Iroquois, daren't deny that I am genuine white," the scout replied, surveying with secret satisfaction the faded color of his bony and sinewy hand; "and I am willing to own that my people have many ways of which, as an honest man, I can't approve. It is one of their customs to write in books what they have done and seen, instead of telling them in their villages, where the lie can be given to the face of a cowardly boaster, and the brave soldier can call on his comrades to witness for the truth of his words. In consequence of this bad fashion a man, who is too conscientious to misspend his days among the women, in learning the names of black marks, may never hear of the deeds of his fathers nor feel a pride in striving to outdo them. For myself, I conclude all the Bumppos

could shoot; for I have a natural turn with a rifle, which must have been handed down from generation to generation, as our holy commandments tell us all good and evil gifts are bestowed; though I should be loth to answer for other people in such a matter. But every story has its two sides: so I ask you, Chingachgook, what passed, according to the traditions of the red men, when our fathers first met?"

A silence of a minute succeeded, during which the Indian sat mute; then, full of the dignity of his office, he commenced his brief tale with a solemnity that served to heighten its appearance of truth.

"Listen, Hawkeye, and your ear shall drink no lie. 'Tis what my fathers have said, and what the Mohicans have done." He hesitated a single instant, and bending a cautious glance towards his companion, he continued, in a manner that was divided between interrogation and assertion. "Does not this stream at our feet run towards the summer until its waters grow salt and the current flows upward?"

"It can't be denied that your traditions tell you true in both these matters," said the white man; "for I have been there and have seen them; though why water, which is so sweet in the shade, should become bitter in the sun, is an alteration for which I have never been able to account."

"And the current!" demanded the Indian, who expected his reply with that sort of interest that a man feels in the confirmation of testimony at which he marvels even while he respects it; "the fathers of Chingachgook have not lied!"

"The Holy Bible is not more true, and that is the truest thing in Nature. They call this up-stream current the tide, which is a thing soon explained and clear enough. Six hours the waters run in and six hours they run out, and the reason is this: when there is higher water in the sea than in the river they run in until the river gets to be highest, and then it runs out again."

"The waters in the woods and on the great lakes run downward until they lie like my hand," said the Indian, stretching the limb horizontally before him, "and then they run no more."

"No honest man will deny it," said the scout, a little nettled at the implied distrust of his explanation of the mystery of the tides; "and I grant that it is true on the small scale and where the land is level. But everything depends on what scale you look at things. Now on the small scale, the 'arth is level; but on the large scale, it is round. In this manner pools and ponds, and even the great freshwater lakes, may be stagnant, as you and I both know they are, having seen them; but when you come to spread water over a great tract like the sea, where the earth is round, how in reason can the water be quiet? You might as well expect the river to lie still on the brink of those black rocks a mile above us, though your own ears tell you that it is tumbling over them at this very moment."

If unsatisfied by the philosophy of his companion, the Indian was far too dignified to betray his unbelief. He listened like one who was convinced, and resumed his narrative in his former solemn manner.

"We came from the place where the sun is hid at night, over great plains where the buffaloes live, until we reached the big river. There we fought the Alligewi, till the ground was red with their blood. From the banks of the big river to the shores of the salt lake there was none to meet us. The Maquas followed at a distance. We said the country should be ours from the place where the water runs up no longer on this stream to a river twenty suns' journey toward the summer. The land we had taken like warriors we kept like men. We drove the Maquas into the woods with the bears. They only tasted salt at the licks; they drew no fish from the great lake; we threw them the bones."

"All this I have heard and believe," said the white man, observing that the Indian paused; "but it was long before the English came into the country."

"A pine grew then where this chestnut now stands. The first pale-faces who came among us spoke no English. They came in a large canoe, when my fathers had buried the tomahawk with the red men around them. Then, Hawkeye," he con-

tinued, betraying his deep emotion only by permitting his voice to fall to those low, guttural tones which render his language, as spoken at times, so very musical; "then, Hawkeye, we were one people, and we were happy. The salt lake gave us its fish, the wood its deer, and the air its birds. We took wives who bore us children; we worshiped the Great Spirit; and we kept the Maquas beyond the sound of our songs of triumph."

"Know you anything of your own family at that time?" demanded the white. "But you are a just man, for an Indian; and as I suppose you hold their gifts, your fathers must have been brave warriors and wise men at the council-fire."

"My tribe is the grandfather of nations, but I am an unmixed man. The blood of chiefs is in my veins, where it must stay forever. The Dutch landed and gave my people the firewater; they drank until the heavens and the earth seemed to meet, and they foolishly thought they had found the Great Spirit. Then they parted with their land. Foot by foot they were driven back from the shores, until I, that am a chief and a Sagamore, have never seen the sun-shine but through the trees, and have never visited the graves of my fathers."

"Graves bring solemn feelings over the mind," returned the scout, a good deal touched at the calm suffering of his companion; "and they often aid a man in his good intentions; though, for myself, I expect to leave my own bones unburied, to bleach in the woods, or to be torn asunder by the wolves. But where are to be found those of your race who came to their kin in the Delaware country, so many summers since?"

"Where are the blossoms of those summers!—fallen one by one; so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of spirits. I am on the hill-top and must go down into the valley; and when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the Sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans."

"Uncas is here," said another voice, in the same soft guttural tones, near his elbow; "who speaks to Uncas?"

The white man loosened his knife in his leathern sheath, and made an involuntary movement of the hand towards his rifle, at this sudden interruption, but the Indian sat composed and without turning his head at the unexpected sounds.

At the next instant a youthful warrior passed between them, with a noiseless step, and seated himself on the bank of the rapid stream. No exclamation of surprise escaped the father, nor was any question asked, or reply given, for several minutes, each appearing to await the moment when he might speak, without betraying womanish curiosity or childish impatience. The white man seemed to take counsel from their customs, and, relinquishing his grasp of the rifle, he also remained silent and reserved. At length Chingachgook turned his eyes slowly towards his son, and demanded—

“Do the Maquas dare to leave the print of their moccasins in these woods?”

“I have been on their trail,” replied the young Indian, “and know that they number as many as the fingers of my two hands; but they lie hid like cowards.”

“The thieves are out-lying for scalps and plunder,” said the white man, whom we shall call Hawkeye, after the manner of his companions. “That busy Frenchman, Montcalm, will send his spies into our very camp but he will know what road we travel.”

“’Tis enough,” returned the father, glancing his eye towards the setting sun; “they shall be driven like deer from their bushes. Hawkeye, let us eat to-night, and show the Maquas that we are men to-morrow.”

“I am as ready to do the one as the other; but to fight the Iroquois ’tis necessary to find the skulkers; and to eat, ’tis necessary to get the game—talk of the devil and he will come; there is a pair of the biggest antlers I have seen this season, moving the bushes below the hill! Now, Uncas,” he continued in a half whisper, and laughing with a kind of inward sound, like one who had learnt to be watchful, “I will bet my charger three times full of powder against a foot of wampum that I take him atwixt the eyes,

and nearer to the right than to the left.”

“It cannot be!” said the young Indian, springing to his feet with youthful eagerness; “all but the tips of his horns are hid!”

“He’s a boy!” said the white man, shaking his head while he spoke, and addressing the father. “Does he think when a hunter sees a part of the creature he can’t tell where the rest of him should be!”

Adjusting his rifle, he was about to make an exhibition of that skill on which he so much valued himself, when the warrior struck up the piece with his hand, saying,

“Hawkeye! will you fight the Maquas?”

“These Indians know the nature of the woods, as it might be by instinct!” returned the scout, dropping his rifle, and turning away like a man who was convinced of his error. “I must leave the buck to your arrow, Uncas, or we may kill a deer for them thieves, the Iroquois, to eat.”

The instant the father seconded this intimation by an expressive gesture of the hand, Uncas threw himself on the ground and approached the animal with wary movements. When within a few yards of the cover he fitted an arrow to his bow with the utmost care, while the antlers moved as if their owner snuffed an enemy in the tainted air. In another moment the twang of the cord was heard, a white streak was seen glancing into the bushes, and the wounded buck plunged from the cover to the very feet of his hidden enemy. Avoiding the horns of the infuriated animal, Uncas darted to his side, and passed his knife across the throat, when bounding to the edge of the river it fell, dyeing the waters with its blood.

“’Twas done with Indian skill,” said the scout, laughing inwardly, but with vast satisfaction; “and ’twas a pretty sight to behold! Though an arrow is a near shot it needs a knife to finish the work.”

“Hugh!” ejaculated his companion, turning quickly, like a hound who scented game.

"By the Lord, there is a drove of them!" exclaimed the scout, whose eyes began to glisten with the ardor of his usual occupation; "if they come within range of a bullet I will drop one, though the whole Six Nations should be lurking within sound! What do you hear, Chingachgook? for to my ears the woods are dumb."

"There is but one deer, and he is dead," said the Indian, bending his body till his ear nearly touched the earth. "I hear the sounds of feet!"

"Perhaps the wolves have driven the buck to shelter, and are following on his trail."

"No. The horses of white men are coming!" returned the other, raising himself with dignity and resuming his seat on the log with his former composure. "Hawkeye, they are your brothers; speak to them."

"That will I, and in English that the king needn't be ashamed to answer," returned the hunter, speaking in the language of which he boasted; "but I see nothing, nor do I hear the sounds of man or beast; 'tis strange that an Indian should understand white sounds better than a man who, his very enemies will own, has no cross in his blood, although he may have lived with the red-skins long enough to be suspected! Ha! there goes something like the crackling of a dry stick, too—now I hear the bushes move—yes, yes, there is a trampling that I mistook for the falls—and—but here they come themselves; God keep them from the Iroquois!"

CHAPTER IV.

Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

THE words were still in the mouth of the scout, when the leader of the party, whose approaching footsteps had caught the vigilant ear of the Indian, came openly into view. A beaten path, such as those made by the periodical passage of the deer, wound through a little glen at no great distance, and struck the river at the

point where the white man and his red companions had posted themselves. Along this track the travelers, who had produced a surprise so unusual in the depths of the forest, advanced slowly towards the hunter, who was in front of his associates in readiness to receive them.

"Who comes?" demanded the scout, throwing his rifle carelessly across his left arm and keeping the forefinger of his right hand on the trigger, though he avoided all appearance of menace in the act—"who comes hither, among the beasts and dangers of the wilderness?"

"Believers in religion and friends to the law and to the king," returned he who rode foremost. "Men who have journeyed since the rising sun in the shades of this forest without nourishment and are sadly tired of their wayfaring."

"You are then lost," interrupted the hunter, "and have found how helpless 'tis not to know whether to take the right hand or the left?"

"Even so; sucking babes are not more dependent on those who guide them than we who are of larger growth, and who may now be said to possess the stature without the knowledge of men. Know you the distance to a post of the crown called William Henry?"

"Hoot!" shouted the scout, who did not spare his open laughter, though, instantly checking the dangerous sounds, he indulged his merriment at less risk of being overheard by any lurking enemies. "You are as much off the scent as a hound would be with Horican atwixt him and the deer! William Henry, man! if you are friends to the king and have business with the army, your better way would be to follow the river down to Edward and lay the matter before Webb, who tarries there, instead of pushing into the defiles, and driving this saucy Frenchman back across Champlain into his den again."

Before the stranger could make any reply to this unexpected proposition, another horseman dashed the bushes aside, and leaped his charger into the pathway, in front of his companion.

"What then may be our distance from

Fort Edward?" demanded the new speaker; "the place you advise us to seek we left this morning and our destination is the head of the lake."

"Then you must have lost your eyesight afore losing your way, for the road across the portage is cut to a good two rods, and is as grand a path, I calculate, as any that runs into London, or even before the palace of the king himself."

"We will not dispute concerning the excellence of the passage," returned Heyward, smiling; for, as the reader has anticipated, it was he. "It is enough for the present that we trusted to an Indian guide to take us by a nearer though blinder path and that we are deceived in his knowledge. In plain words, we know not where we are."

"An Indian lost in the woods," said the scout, shaking his head doubtfully; "when the sun is scorching the tree tops, and the water courses are full; when the moss on every beech he sees will tell him in which quarter the north star will shine at night! The woods are full of deer-paths which run to the streams and licks, —places well known to everybody; nor have the geese done their flight to the Canada waters altogether! 'Tis strange that an Indian should be lost atwixt Huron and the bend in the river! Is he a Mohawk?"

"Not by birth, though adopted in that tribe; I think his birthplace was further north, and he is one of those you call a Huron."

"Hugh!" exclaimed the two companions of the scout, who had continued until this part of the dialogue, seated immovable, and apparently indifferent to what passed, but who now sprang to their feet with an activity and interest that had evidently got the better of their reserve, by surprise.

"A Huron!" repeated the sturdy scout, once more shaking his head in open distrust; "they are a thievish race, nor do I care by whom they are adopted; you can never make anything of them but skulks and vagabonds. Since you trusted yourself to the care of one of that nation,

I only wonder that you have not fallen in with more."

"Of that there is little danger, since William Henry is so many miles in our front. You forget that I have told you our guide is now a Mohawk, and that he serves with our forces as a friend."

"And I tell you that he who is born a Mingo will die a Mingo," returned the other, positively. "A Mohawk! No; give me a Delaware or a Mohican for honesty; and when they will fight, which they won't all do, having suffered their cunning enemies, the Maquas, to make them women—but when they will fight at all, look to a Delaware, or a Mohican, for a warrior!"

"Enough of this," said Heyward, impatiently; "I wish not to inquire into the character of a man that I know, and to whom you must be a stranger. You have not yet answered my question: what is our distance from the main army at Edward?"

"It seems that may depend on who is your guide. One would think such a horse as that might get over a good deal of ground atwixt sun-up and sun-down."

"I wish no contention of idle words with you, friend," said Heyward, curbing his dissatisfied manner, and speaking in a more gentle voice; "if you will tell me the distance to Fort Edward, and conduct me thither, your labor shall not go without its reward."

"And in so doing, how know I that I don't guide an enemy and a spy of Montcalm to the works of the army? It is not every man who can speak the English tongue that is an honest subject."

"If you serve with the troops, of whom I judge you to be a scout, you should know of such a regiment of the king as the 60th."

"The 60th! you can tell me little of the Royal Americans that I don't know, though I do wear a hunting-shirt instead of a scarlet jacket."

"Well, then, among other things, you may know the name of its major?"

"Its major!" interrupted the hunter, elevating his body like one who was proud of its trust. "If there is a man in the

country who knows Major Effingham, he stands before you."

"It is a corps which has many majors; the gentleman you name is the senior, but I speak of the junior of them all; he who commands the companies in garrison at William Henry."

"Yes, yes, I have heard that a young gentleman of vast riches, from one of the provinces far south, has got the place. He is over young, too, to hold such rank, and to be put above men whose heads are beginning to bleach; and yet they say he is a soldier in his knowledge and a gallant gentleman!"

"Whatever he may be, or however he may be qualified for his rank, he now speaks to you, and of course can be no enemy to dread."

The scout regarded Heyward in surprise, and then lifting his cap, he answered in a tone less confident than before—though still expressing doubt—

"I have heard a party was to leave the encampment this morning for the lake shore?"

"You have heard the truth; but I preferred a nearer route, trusting to the knowledge of the Indian I mentioned."

"And he deceived you, and then deserted?"

"Neither, as I believe; certainly not the latter, for he is to be found in the rear."

"I should like to look at the creatur'; if it is a true Iroquois I can tell him by his knavish look and by his paint," said the scout, stepping past the charger of Heyward, and entering the path behind the mare of the singing master, whose foal had taken advantage of the halt to exact the maternal contribution. After shoving aside the bushes, and proceeding a few paces, he encountered the females, who awaited the result of the conference with anxiety, and not entirely without apprehension. Behind these, the runner leaned against a tree, where he stood the close examination of the scout with an air unmoved, though with a look so dark and savage, that it might in itself excite fear. Satisfied with his scrutiny, the hunter soon left him. As he repassed the females,

he paused a moment to gaze upon their beauty, answering to the smile and nod of Alice with a look of open pleasure. Thence he went to the side of the motherly animal, and spending a minute in a fruitless inquiry into the character of her rider, he shook his head and returned to Heyward.

"A Mingo is a Mingo, and God having made him so, neither the Mohawks nor any other tribe can alter him," he said, when he had regained his former position. "If we were alone, and you would leave that noble horse at the mercy of the wolves to-night, I could show you the way to Edward, myself, within an hour, for it lies only about an hour's journey hence; but with such ladies in your company 'tis impossible!"

"And why? they are fatigued, but they are quite equal to a ride of a few more miles."

"'Tis a natural impossibility!" repeated the scout; "I wouldn't walk a mile in these woods after night gets into them, in company with that runner, for the best rifle in the colonies. They are full of outlying Iroquois, and your mongrel Mohawk knows where to find them too well to be my companion."

"Think you so?" said Heyward, leaning forward in the saddle and dropping his voice nearly to a whisper; "I confess I have not been without my own suspicions, though I have endeavored to conceal them, and affected a confidence I have not always felt, on account of my companions. It was because I suspected him that I would follow no longer; making him, as you see, follow me."

"I knew he was one of the cheats as soon as I laid eyes on him!" returned the scout, placing a finger on his nose, in sign of caution. "The thief is leaning against the foot of the sugar sapling, that you can see over them bushes; his right leg is in a line with the bark of the tree, and," tapping his rifle, "I can take him from where I stand, between the ankle and the knee, with a single shot, putting an end to his tramping through the woods for at least a month to come. If I should go back to him, the cunning varmint would suspect

something, and be dodging through the trees like a frightened deer."

"It will not do. He may be innocent, and I dislike the act. Though if I felt confident of his treachery——"

"'Tis a safe thing to calculate on the knavery of an Iroquois," said the scout, throwing his rifle forward by a sort of instinctive movement.

"Hold!" interrupted Heyward, "it will not do—we must think of some other scheme—and yet, I have much reason to believe the rascal has deceived me."

The hunter, who had already abandoned his intention of maiming the runner, mused a moment and then made a gesture which instantly brought his two red companions to his side. They spoke together earnestly in the Delaware language, though in an undertone; and by the gestures of the white man, which were frequently directed towards the top of the sapling, it was evident he pointed out the situation of their hidden enemy. His companions were not long in comprehending his wishes, and laying aside their firearms, they parted, taking opposite sides of the path and burying themselves in the thicket with such cautious movements that their steps were inaudible.

"Now, go you back," said the hunter, speaking again to Heyward, "and hold the imp in talk; these Mohicans here will take him without breaking his paint."

"Nay," said Heyward proudly, "I will seize him myself."

"Hist! what could you do mounted against an Indian in the bushes?"

"I will dismount."

"And, think you, when he saw one of your feet out of the stirrup, he would wait for the other to be free? Whoever comes into the woods to deal with the natives must use Indian fashions, if he would wish to prosper in his undertakings. Go, then; talk openly to the miscreant, and seem to believe him the truest friend you have on earth."

Heyward prepared to comply, though with strong disgust at the nature of the office he was compelled to execute. Each moment, however, pressed upon him a conviction of the critical situation in which he had

suffered his invaluable trust to be involved through his own confidence. The sun had already disappeared, and the woods, suddenly deprived of his light,* were assuming a dusky hue, which keenly reminded him that the hour the savage usually chose for his most barbarous and remorseless acts of vengeance or hostility was speedily drawing near. Stimulated by apprehension, he left the scout, who immediately entered into a loud conversation with the stranger that had so unceremoniously enlisted himself in the party of travelers that morning. In passing his gentler companions Heyward uttered a few words of encouragement, and was pleased to find, that, though fatigued with the exercise of the day, they appeared to entertain no suspicion that their present embarrassment was other than the result of accident. Giving them reason to believe he was merely employed in a consultation concerning the future route, he spurred his charger, and drew the reins again, when the animal had carried him within a few yards of the place where the sullen runner still stood, leaning against a tree.

"You may see, Magua," he said, endeavoring to assume an air of freedom and confidence, "that the night is closing around us, and yet we are no nearer to William Henry than when we left the encampment of Webb with the rising sun. You have missed the way, nor have I been more fortunate. But happily, we have fallen in with a hunter, he whom you hear talking to the singer that is acquainted with the deer-paths and by-ways of the woods, and who promises to leads us to a place where we may rest securely till morning."

The Indian riveted his glowing eyes on Heyward as he asked in his imperfect English, "Is he alone?"

"Alone!" hesitatingly answered Heyward to whom deception was too new to be assumed without embarrassment. "Oh! not alone, surely Magua, for you know that we are with him."

*The scene of this tale was in the 42d degree of latitude, where the twilight is never of long continuance.

"Then Le Renard Subtil will go," returned the runner, coolly raising his little wallet from the place where it had lain at his feet; "and the pale-faces will see none but their own color."

"Go! Whom call you Le Renard?"

"'Tis the name his Canada fathers have given to Magua," returned the runner with an air that manifested his pride at the distinction. "Night is the same as day to Le Subtil when Munro waits for him."

"And what account will Le Renard give the chief of William Henry concerning his daughters? Will he dare to tell the hot-blooded Scotsman that his children are left without a guide, though Magua promised to be one?"

"Though the gray head has a loud voice and a long arm, Le Renard will not hear him nor feel him in the woods."

"But what will the Mohawks say? They will make him petticoats and bid him stay in the wigwam with the women, for he is no longer to be trusted with the business of a man."

"Le Subtil knows the path to the great lakes, and he can find the bones of his fathers," was the answer of the unmoved runner.

"Enough, Magua," said Heyward; "are we not friends? Why should there be bitter words between us? Munro has promised you a gift for your services when performed, and I shall be your debtor for another. Rest your weary limbs, then, and open your wallet to eat. We have a few moments to spare; let us not waste them in talk like wrangling women. When the ladies are refreshed we will proceed."

"The pale-faces make themselves dogs to their women," muttered the Indian in his native language; "and when they want to eat, their warriors must lay aside the tomahawk to feed their laziness."

"What say you, Renard?"

"Le Subtil says it is good."

The Indian then fastened his eyes keenly on the open countenance of Heyward, but meeting his glance, he turned them quickly away, and seating himself deliberately on the ground, he drew forth the remnant of some former repast, and began to eat,

though not without first bending his looks slowly and cautiously around him.

"This is well," continued Heyward; "and Le Renard will have strength and sight to find the path in the morning;"—he paused, for sounds like the snapping of a dry stick and the rustling of leaves rose from the adjacent bushes, but recollecting himself instantly, he continued—"we must be moving before the sun is seen, or Montcalm may lie in our path and shut us out from the fortress."

The hand of Magua dropped from his mouth to his side, and though his eyes were fastened on the ground, his head was turned aside, his nostrils expanded and his ears seemed even to stand more erect than usual, giving to him the appearance of a statue that was made to represent intense attention.

Heyward, who watched his movements with a vigilant eye, carelessly extricated one of his feet from the stirrup, while he passed a hand towards the bear-skin covering of his holsters. Every effort to detect the point most regarded by the runner was completely frustrated by the tremulous glances of his organs, which seemed not to rest a single instant on any particular object, and which, at the same time, could be hardly said to move. While he hesitated how to proceed, Le Subtil cautiously raised himself to his feet, though with a motion so slow and guarded that not the slightest noise was produced by the change. Heyward felt it had now become incumbent on him to act. Throwing his leg over the saddle, he dismounted, with a determination to advance and seize his treacherous companion, trusting the results to his own manhood. In order, however, to prevent unnecessary alarm, he still preserved an air of calmness and friendship.

"Le Renard Subtil does not eat," he said, using the appellation he had found most flattering to the vanity of the Indian. "His corn is not well parched, and it seems dry. Let me examine; perhaps something may be found among my own provisions that will help his appetite."

Magua held out the wallet to the proffer of the other. He even suffered their hands

to meet, without betraying the least emotion or varying his riveted attitude of attention. But when he felt the fingers of Heyward moving gently along his own naked arm, he struck up the limb of the young man, and uttering a piercing cry as he darted beneath it, plunged, at a single bound, into the opposite thicket. At the next instant the form of Chingachgook appeared from the bushes, looking like a specter in his paint, and glided across the path in swift pursuit. Next followed the shout of Uncas, when the woods were lighted by a sudden flash that was accompanied by the sharp report of the hunter's rifle.

CHAPTER V.

—“In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o’ertrip the dew;
And saw the lion’s shadow ere himself.”
—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE suddenness of the flight of his guide, and the wild cries of the pursuers, caused Heyward to remain fixed, for a few moments, in inactive surprise. Then recollecting the importance of securing the fugitive, he dashed aside the surrounding bushes, and pressed eagerly forward to lend his aid in the chase. Before he had, however, proceeded a hundred yards, he met the three foresters already returning from their unsuccessful pursuit.

“Why so soon disheartened!” he exclaimed, “the scoundrel must be concealed behind some of these trees, and may yet be secured. We are not safe while he goes at large.”

“Would you set a cloud to chase the wind?” returned the disappointed scout; “I heard the imp brushing over the dry leaves like a black snake, and blinking a glimpse of him just over ag’in yon big pine, I pulled as it might be on the scent; but ’twouldn’t do! and yet for a reasoning aim, if anybody but myself had touched the trigger, I should call it a quick sight; and I may be accounted to have experience in these matters and one who ought to know. Look at this sumach; its leaves are red, though every-

body knows the fruit is in the yellow blossom in the month of July!”

“’Tis the blood of Le Subtil! he is hurt and may yet fall!”

“No, no,” returned the scout, in decided disapprobation of this opinion, “I rubbed the bark off a limb, perhaps, but the creature leaped the longer for it. A rifle bullet acts on a running animal, when it barks him, much the same as one of your spurs on a horse; that is, it quickens motion, and puts life into the flesh instead of taking it away. But when it cuts the ragged hole, after a bound or two, there is, commonly, a stagnation of further leaping, be it Indian or be it deer!”

“We are four able bodies to one wounded man!”

“Is life grievous to you?” interrupted the scout. “Yonder red devil would draw you within swing of the tomahawks of his comrades before you were heated in the chase. It was an unthoughtful act in a man who has so often slept with the war-whoop ringing in the air to let off his piece within sound of an ambushment! But then it was a natural temptation! ’twas very natural! Come, friends, let us move our station, and in such a fashion, too, as will throw the cunning of a Mingo on a wrong scent, or our scalps will be drying in the wind in front of Montcalm’s marquee ag’in this hour to-morrow.”

This appalling declaration, which the scout uttered with the cool assurance of a man who fully comprehended, while he did not fear to face the danger, served to remind Heyward of the importance of the charge with which he himself had been intrusted. Glancing his eyes around, with a vain effort to pierce the gloom that was thickening beneath the leafy arches of the forest, he felt as if, cut off from human aid, his unresisting companions would soon lie at the entire mercy of those barbarous enemies who, like beasts of prey, only waited till the gathering darkness might render their blows more fatally certain. His awakened imagination, deluded by the deceptive light, converted each waving bush, or the fragment of some fallen tree, into human forms, and twenty times he

fancied he could distinguish the horrid visages of his lurking foes peering from their hiding-places in never-ceasing watchfulness of the movements of his party. Looking upward, he found that the tiny, fleecy clouds which evening had painted on the blue sky were already losing their faintest tints of rose-color, while the imbedded stream which glided past the spot where he stood was to be traced only by the dark boundary of its wooded banks.

"What is to be done?" he said, feeling the utter helplessness of doubt in such a pressing strait; "desert me not, for God's sake! remain to defend those I escort, and freely name your own reward!"

His companions, who conversed apart in the language of their tribe, heeded not this sudden and earnest appeal. Though their dialogue was maintained in low and cautious sounds but little above a whisper, Heyward, who now approached, could easily distinguish the earnest tones of the younger warrior from the more deliberate speeches of his seniors. It was evident that they debated on the propriety of some measure that nearly concerned the welfare of the travelers. Yielding to his powerful interest in the subject, and impatient of a delay that seemed fraught with so much additional danger, Heyward drew still nigher to the dusky group, with an intention of making his offers of compensation more definite, when the white man, motioning with his hand, as if he conceded the disputed point, turned away, saying in a sort of soliloquy and in the English tongue—

"Uncas is right! it would not be the act of men to leave such harmless things to their fate, even though it breaks up the harboring place forever. If you would save these tender blossoms from the fangs of the worst of serpents, gentleman, you have neither time to lose nor resolution to throw away!"

"How can such a wish be doubted! have I not already offered—?"

"Offer your prayers to him who can give us wisdom to circumvent the cunning of the devils who fill these woods," calmly interrupted the scout, "but spare your offers of money, which neither you may

live to realize nor I to profit by. These Mohicans and I will do what man's thoughts can invent to keep such flowers which, though so sweet, were never made for the wilderness, from harm, and that without hope of any other recompense but such as God always gives to upright dealings. First, you must promise two things, both in your own name and for your friends, or without serving you, we shall only injure ourselves!"

"Name them."

"The one is, to be still as these sleeping woods, let what will happen; and the other is, to keep the place where we shall take you forever a secret from all mortal men."

"I will do my utmost to see both these conditions fulfilled."

"Then follow, for we are losing moments that are as precious as the heart's blood to a stricken deer."

Heyward could distinguish the impatient gesture of the scout through the increasing shadows of the evening, and he moved in his footsteps swiftly towards the place where he had left the remainder of his party. When they rejoined the expecting and anxious females, he briefly acquainted them with the conditions of their new guide, and with the necessity that existed for their hushing every apprehension in instant and serious exertion. Although his alarming communication was not received without much secret terror by the listeners, his earnest and impressive manner, aided perhaps by the nature of the danger, succeeded in bracing their nerves to undergo some unlooked for and unusual trial. Silently, and without a moment's delay, they permitted him to assist them from their saddles, when they descended quickly to the water's edge, where the scout had collected the rest of the party, more by the agency of expressive gestures than by any use of words.

"What to do with these dumb creatures!" uttered the white man, on whom the sole control of their future movements appeared to devolve; "it would be time lost to cut their throats, and cast them into the river; and to leave them here, would be to tell the Mingoes that they

have not far to seek to find their owners!"

"Then give them their bridles, and let them range the woods," Heyward ventured to suggest.

"No; it would be better to mislead the imps, and make them believe they must equal a horse's speed to run down their chase. Aye, aye, that will blind their fire-balls of eyes! Chingach—Hist! what stirs the bush?"

"The colt."

"That colt, at least, must die," muttered the scout, grasping at the mane of the nimble beast, which easily eluded his hand; "Uncas, your arrows!"

"Hold!" exclaimed the proprietor of the condemned animal aloud, without regard to the whispering tones used by the others; "spare the foal of Miriam! it is the comely offspring of a faithful dam, and would willingly injure naught!"

"When men struggle for the single life God has given them," said the scout sternly, "even their own kind seem no more than the beasts of the wood. If you speak again I shall leave you to the mercy of the Maquas! Draw to your arrow's head, Uncas; we have no time for second blows."

The low, muttering sounds of his threatening voice were still audible, when the wounded foal, first rearing on its hinder legs, plunged forward to its knees. It was met by Chingachgook, whose knife passed across its throat quicker than thought, and then precipitating the motions of the struggling victim, he dashed it into the river, down whose stream it glided away, gasping audibly for breath with its ebbing life. This deed of apparent cruelty, but of real necessity, fell upon the spirits of the travelers like a terrific warning of the peril in which they stood, heightened as it was by the calm though steady resolution of the actors in the scene. The sisters shuddered and clung closer to each other, while Heyward instinctively laid his hand on one of the pistols he had just drawn from their holsters, as he placed himself between his charge and those dense shadows that seemed to draw an impenetrable veil before the bosom of the forest.

The Indians, however, hesitated not a moment, but taking the bridles they led the frightened and reluctant horses into the bed of the river.

At a short distance from the shore they turned and were soon concealed by the projection of the bank, under the brow of which they moved in a direction opposite to the course of the waters. In the meantime the scout drew a canoe of bark from its place of concealment beneath some low bushes, whose branches were waving with the eddies of the current, into which he silently motioned for the females to enter. They complied without hesitation, though many a fearful and anxious glance was thrown behind them towards the thickening gloom, which now lay like a dark barrier along the margin of the stream.

So soon as Cora and Alice were seated the scout, without regarding the element, directed Heyward to support one side of the frail vessel, and posting himself at the other, they bore it up against the stream, followed by the dejected owner of the dead foal. In this manner they proceeded for many rods in a silence that was only interrupted by the rippling of the water as its eddies played around them, or the low dash made by their own cautious footsteps. Heyward yielded the guidance of the canoe implicitly to the scout, who approached or receded from the shore to avoid the fragments of rocks or deeper parts of the river with a readiness that showed his knowledge of the route they held. Occasionally he would stop, and in the midst of a breathing stillness that the dull but increasing roar of the waterfall only served to render more impressive, he would listen with painful intensesness to catch any sounds that might arise from the slumbering forest. When assured that all was still, and unable to detect even by the aid of his practiced senses any sign of his approaching foes, he would deliberately assume his slow and guarded progress. At length they reached a point in the river where the roving eye of Heyward became riveted upon a cluster of black objects, collected at a spot where the high bank threw a deeper

shadow than usual on the dark waters. Hesitating to advance, he pointed out the place to the attention of his companion.

"Aye," returned the composed scout, "the Indians have hid the beasts with the judgment of natives! Water leaves no trail, and an owl's eye would be blinded by the darkness of such a hole."

The whole party was soon reunited and another consultation was held between the scout and his new comrades, during which they, whose fates depended on the faith and ingenuity of these unknown foresters, had a little leisure to observe their situation more minutely.

The river was confined between high and cragged rocks, one of which impended above the spot where the canoe rested. As these, again, were surmounted by tall trees, which appeared to totter on the brows of the precipice, it gave the stream the appearance of running through a deep and narrow dell. All beneath the fantastic limbs and ragged tree tops, which were, here and there, dimly painted against the starry zenith, lay alike in shadowed obscurity. Behind them, the curvature of the banks soon bounded the view by the same dark and wooded outline; but in front, and apparently at no great distance, the water seemed piled against the heavens, whence it tumbled into caverns, out of which issued those sullen sounds that had loaded the evening atmosphere. It seemed, in truth, to be a spot devoted to seclusion, and the sisters imbibed a soothing impression of security as they gazed upon its romantic though not unappalling beauties. A general movement among their conductors, however, soon recalled them from a contemplation of the wild charms that night had assisted to end the place, to a painful sense of their real peril.

The horses had been secured to some scattering shrubs that grew in the fissures of the rocks, where, standing in the water, they were left to pass the night. The scout directed Heyward and his disconsolate fellow travelers to seat themselves in the forward end of the canoe, and took possession of the other himself, as erect and steady as if he floated in a vessel of

much firmer materials. The Indians warily retraced their steps towards the place they had left, when the scout, placing his pole against a rock, by a powerful shove sent his frail bark directly into the center of the turbulent stream. For many minutes the struggle between the light bubble in which they floated and the swift current was severe and doubtful. Forbidden to stir even a hand, and almost afraid to breathe, lest they should expose the frail fabric to the fury of the stream, the passengers watched the glancing waters in feverish suspense. Twenty times they thought the whirling eddies were sweeping them to destruction, when the master-hand of their pilot would bring the bows of the canoe to stem the rapid. A long, a vigorous, and, as it appeared to the females, a desperate effort, closed the struggle. Just as Alice veiled her eyes in horror, under the impression that they were about to be swept within the vortex at the foot of the cataract, the canoe floated, stationary, at the side of a flat rock that lay on a level with the water.

"Where are we? and what is next to be done?" demanded Heyward, perceiving that the exertions of the scout had ceased.

"You are at the foot of Glenn's," returned the other, speaking aloud, without fear of consequences within the roar of the cataract; "and the next thing is to make a steady landing, lest the canoe upset and you should go down again the hard road we have traveled faster than you came up; 'tis a hard rift to stem, when the river is a little swelled; and five is an unnatural number to keep dry, in a hurry-scurry, with a little birchen bark and gum. There, go you all on the rock, and I will bring up the Mohicans with the venison. A man had better sleep without his scalp than famish in the midst of plenty."

His passengers gladly complied with these directions. As the last foot touched the rock the canoe whirled from its station, when the tall form of the scout was seen, for an instant, gliding above the waters before it disappeared in the impenetrable darkness that rested on the bed of the river. Left by their guide, the travelers

remained a few minutes in helpless ignorance, afraid even to move along the broken rocks lest a false step should precipitate them down some one of the many deep and roaring caverns, into which the water seemed to tumble on every side of them. Their suspense, however, was soon relieved; for, aided by the skill of the natives, the canoe shot back into the eddy, and floated again at the side of the low rock before they thought the scout had even time to rejoin his companions.

"We are now fortified, garrisoned and provisioned," cried Heyward, cheerfully, "and may set Montcalm and his allies at defiance. How, now, my vigilant sentinel, can you see anything of those you call the Iroquois on the main land?"

"I call them Iroquois because to me every native who speaks a foreign tongue is accounted an enemy, though he may pretend to serve the king! If Webb wants faith and honesty in an Indian, let him bring out the tribes of the Delawares, and send these greedy and lying Mohawks and Oneidas, with their six nations of varlets, where in nature they belong—among the French!"

"We should then exchange a warlike for a useless friend! I have heard that the Delawares have laid aside the hatchet, and are content to be called women!"

"Aye, shame on the Hollanders* and Iroquois, who circumvented them by their devilries, into such a treaty! But I have known them for twenty years, and I call him liar that says cowardly blood runs in the veins of a Delaware. You have driven their tribes from the seashore, and would now believe what their enemies say, that you may sleep at night upon an easy pillow. No, no; to me every Indian who speaks a foreign tongue is an Iroquois, whether† the castle of his tribe be in Canada or be in York."

Heywood, perceiving that the stubborn adherence of the scout to the cause of his

friends the Delawares, or Mohicans; for they were branches of the same numerous people, was likely to prolong a useless discussion, changed the subject.

"Treaty or no treaty, I know full well that your two companions are brave and cautious warriors. Have they heard or seen anything of our enemies?"

"An Indian is a mortal to be felt afore he is seen," returned the scout, ascending the rock, and throwing the deer carelessly down. "I trust to other signs than such as come in at the eye, when I am outlying on the trail of the Mingoes."

"Do your ears tell you that they have traced our retreat?"

"I should be sorry to think they had, though this is a spot that stout courage might hold for a smart skirmish. I will not deny, however, but the horses cowered when I passed them, as though they scented the wolves; and a wolf is a beast that is apt to hover about an Indian ambushment, craving the offals of the deer the savages kill."

"You forget the buck at your feet! or, may we not owe their visit to the dead colt? Ha! what noise is that?"

"Poor Miriam!" murmured the stranger; "thy foal was foreordained to become a prey to ravenous beasts!" Then, suddenly lifting up his voice, amid the eternal din of the waters, he sang aloud—

"First born of Egypt, smite did he,
Of mankind, and of beast also;
O, Egypt! wonders sent 'midst thee,
On Pharaoh and his servants too!"

"The death of the colt sits heavy on the heart of its owner," said the scout; "but it's a good sign to see a man account upon his dumb friends. He has the religion of the matter, in believing what is to happen will happen; and with such a consolation, it won't be long afore he submits to the rationality of killing a four-footed beast to save the lives of human men. It may be as you say," he continued, reverting to the purport of Heyward's last remark; "and the greater the reason why we should cut our steaks, and let the carcass drive down the stream, or we shall have the pack howling, along the cliffs,

* The reader will remember that New York was originally a colony of the Dutch.

† The principal village of the Indians are still called "castle" by the whites of New York. "Oneida castle" is no more than a scattered hamlet; but the name is in general use.

begrudging every mouthful we swallow. Besides, though the Delaware tongue is the same as a book to the Iroquois, the cunning varlets are quick enough at understanding the reason of a wolf's howl."

The scout, whilst making this remark, was busied in collecting certain necessary implements; as he concluded, he moved silently by the group of travelers, accompanied by the Mohicans, who seemed to comprehend his intentions with instinctive readiness, when the whole three disappeared in succession, seeming to vanish against the dark face of a perpendicular rock, that rose to the height of a few yards, within as many feet of the water's edge.

CHAPTER VI.

"Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide;
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And 'let us worship God,' he says, with solemn
air."

—BURNS.

HEYWARD and his female companions witnessed this mysterious movement with secret uneasiness; for, though the conduct of the white man had hitherto been above reproach, his rude equipments, blunt address, and strong antipathies, together with the character of his silent associates, were all causes for exciting distrust in minds that had been so recently alarmed by Indian treachery.

The stranger alone disregarded the passing incidents. He seated himself on a projection of the rocks, whence he gave no other signs of consciousness than by the struggles of his spirit, as manifested in frequent and heavy sighs. Smothered voices were next heard, as though men called to each other in the bowels of the earth, when a sudden light flashed upon those without and laid bare the much-prized secret of the place.

At the further extremity of a narrow, deep cavern in the rock, whose length appeared much extended by the perspective and the nature of the light by which it was seen, was seated the scout, holding a blazing knot of pine. The strong glare of the fire fell full upon his sturdy, weather-

beaten countenance and forest attire, lending an air of romantic wildness to the aspect of an individual who, seen by the sober light of day, would have exhibited the peculiarities of a man remarkable for the strangeness of his dress, the iron-like inflexibility of his frame, and the singular compound of quick, vigilant sagacity, and of exquisite simplicity, that by turns usurped the possession of his muscular features. At a little distance in advance stood Uncas, his whole person thrown powerfully into view. The travelers anxiously regarded the upright, flexible figure of the young Mohican, graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of Nature. Though his person was more than usually screened by a green and fringed hunting-shirt, like that of the white man, there was no concealment to his dark, glancing, fearless eye, alike terrible and calm; the bold outline of his high, haughty features, pure in their native red, or to the dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head, bared to the generous scalping tuft. It was the first opportunity possessed by Duncan and his companions to view the marked lineaments of either of their Indian attendants, and each individual of the party felt relieved from a burden of doubt as the proud and determined, though wild expression of the features of the young warrior forced itself on their notice. They felt it might be a being partially benighted in the vale of ignorance, but it could not be one who would willingly devote his rich natural gifts to the purposes of wanton treachery. The ingenuous Alice gazed at his free air and proud carriage as she would have looked upon some precious relic of the Grecian chisel, to which life had been imparted by the intervention of a miracle; while Heyward, though accustomed to see the perfection of form which abounds among the uncorrupted natives, openly expressed his admiration at such an unblemished specimen of the noblest proportions of man.

"I could sleep in peace," whispered Alice, in reply, "with such a fearless and generous-looking youth for my sentinel.

Surely, Duncan, those cruel murders, those terrific scenes of torture, of which we read and hear so much, are never acted in the presence of such as he?"

"This certainly is a rare and brilliant instance of those natural qualities in which these peculiar people are said to excel," he answered. "I agree with you, Alice, in thinking that such a front and eye were formed rather to intimidate than to deceive; but let us not practice a deception upon ourselves by expecting any other exhibition of what we esteem virtue than according to the fashion of a savage. As bright examples of great qualities are but too uncommon among Christians, so are they singular and solitary with the Indians; though, for the honor of our common nature, neither are incapable of producing them. Let us then hope that this Mohican may not disappoint our wishes, but prove what his looks assert him to be, a brave and constant friend."

"Now Major Heyward speaks as Major Heyward should," said Cora; "who that looks at this creature of nature remembers the shade of his skin?"

A short and apparently an embarrassed silence succeeded this remark, which was interrupted by the scout calling to them aloud to enter.

"This fire begins to show too bright a flame," he continued, as they complied, "and might light the Mingoes to our undoing. Uncas, drop the blanket and show the knaves its dark side. This is not such a supper as a major of the Royal Americans has a right to expect, but I've known stout detachments of the corps glad to eat their venison raw, and without a relish, too.* Here, you see, we have plenty of salt and can make a quick broil. There's fresh sassafras boughs for the ladies to sit on, which may not be as

proud as their my-hog-guinea chairs, but which sends up a sweeter flavor than the skin of any hog can do, be it of Guinea, or be it of any other land. Come, friend, don't be mournful for the colt; 'twas an innocent thing and had not seen much hardship. Its death will save the creature many a sore back and weary foot."

Uncas did as the other had directed, and when the voice of Hawkeye ceased the roar of the cataract sounded like the rumbling of distant thunder.

"Are we quite safe in this cavern?" demanded Heyward. "Is there no danger of surprise? A single-armed man at its entrance would hold us at his mercy."

A spectral-looking figure stalked from out the darkness behind the scout, and seizing a blazing brand, held it towards the further extremity of their place of retreat. Alice uttered a faint shriek, and even Cora rose to her feet as this appalling object moved into the light; but a single word from Heyward calmed them with the assurance it was only their attendant, Chingachgook, who, lifting another blanket, discovered that the cavern had two outlets. Then, holding the brand, he crossed a deep, narrow chasm in the rocks, which ran at right angles with the passage they were in, but which, unlike that, was open to the heavens, and entered another cave, answering to the description of the first in every essential particular.

"Such old foxes as Chingachgook and myself are not often caught in a burrow with one hole," said Hawkeye, laughing; "you can easily see the cunning of the place—the rock is black limestone, which everybody knows is soft; it makes no uncomfortable pillow where brush and pine wood is scarce; well, the fall was once a few yards below us, and I dare to say was, in its time, as regular and as handsome a sheet of water as any along the Hudson. But old age is a great injury to good looks, as these sweet young ladies have yet to l'arn! The place is sadly changed! These rocks are full of cracks, and in some places they are softer than at othersome, and the water has worked out

* In vulgar parlance, the condiments of a repast are called by the American "a relish," substituting the thing for its effect. These provincial terms are frequently put in the mouths of the speakers, according to their several conditions in life. Most of them are of local use and others quite peculiar to the particular class of men to which the character belongs. In the present instance the scout uses the word with immediate reference to the "salt" with which his own party was so fortunate as to be provided.

deep hollows for itself, until it has fallen back, aye, some hundred feet, breaking here and wearing there, until the falls have neither shape nor consistency."

"In what part of them are we?" asked Heyward.

"Why, we are nigh the spot that Providence first placed them at, but where, it seems, they were too rebellious to stay. The rock proved softer on each side of us, and so they left the center of the river bare and dry, first working out these two little holes for us to hide in."

"We are then on an island?"

"Aye! there are the falls on two sides of us and the river above and below. If you had daylight, it would be worth the trouble to step up on the height of this rock and look at the perversity of the water. It falls by no rule at all; sometimes it leaps, sometimes it tumbles; there, it skips; here, it shoots; in one place 'tis white as snow and in another 'tis green as grass; hereabouts, it pitches into deep hollows, that rumble and quake the 'arth; and thereaway, it ripples and sings like a brook, fashioning whirlpools and gulleys in the old stone, as if 'twas no harder than trodden clay. The whole design of the river seems disconcerted. First it runs smoothly, as if meaning to go down the descent as things were ordered; then it angles about and faces the shores; nor are there places wanting where it looks backward, as if unwilling to leave the wilderness, to mingle with the salt! Aye, lady, the fine cobweb-looking cloth you wear at your throat is coarse, and like a fish-net, to little spots I can show you, where the river fabricates all sorts of images, as if, having broke loose from order, it would try its hand at everything. And yet what does it amount to! After the water has been suffered to have its will for a time, like a headstrong man, it is gathered together by the hand that made it, and a few rods below you may see it all, flowing on steadily towards the sea, as was foreordained from the first foundation of the 'arth!"

While his auditors received a cheering assurance of the security of their place of concealment from this untutored description of

(Glenn's,* they were much inclined to judge differently from Hawkeye of its wild beauties. But they were not in a situation to suffer their thoughts to dwell on the charms of natural objects; and, as the scout had not found it necessary to cease his culinary labors while he spoke, unless to point out, with a broken fork, the direction of some particularly obnoxious point in the rebellious stream, they now suffered their attention to be drawn to the necessary though more vulgar consideration of their supper.

The repast, which was greatly aided by the addition of a few delicacies that Heyward had the precaution to bring with him when they left their horses, was exceedingly refreshing to the wearied party. Uncas acted as attendant to the females, performing all the little offices within his power with a mixture of dignity and anxious grace that served to amuse Heyward, who well knew that it was an utter innovation on the Indian customs, which forbid their warriors to descend to any menial employment, especially in favor of their women. As the rights of hospitality were, however, considered sacred among them, this little departure from the dignity of manhood excited no audible comment. Had there been one there sufficiently disengaged to become a close observer, he might have fancied that the services of the young chief were not entirely impartial. That while he tendered to Alice the gourd of sweet water and the venison in a trencher, neatly carved from the knot of the pepperidge, with sufficient courtesy, in performing the same offices to her sister his dark eye lingered on her rich,

*Glenn's Falls are on the Hudson, some forty or fifty miles above the head of the tide, or the place where that river becomes navigable for sloops. The description of this picturesque and remarkable little cataract, as given by the scout, is sufficiently correct, though the application of the water to the uses of civilized life has materially injured its beauties. The rocky island and the two caverns are well known to every traveler, since the former sustains a pier of a bridge which is now thrown across the river, immediately above the fall. In explanation of the taste of Hawkeye, it should be remembered that men always prize that most which is least enjoyed. Thus, in a new country, the woods and other objects, which in an old country would be maintained at great cost, are got rid of, simply with a view of "improving," as it is called.

speaking countenance. Once or twice he was compelled to speak, to command the attention of those he served. In such cases he made use of English, broken and imperfect, but sufficiently intelligible, and which he rendered so mild and musical by his deep,* guttural voice, that it never failed to cause both ladies to look up in admiration and astonishment. In the course of these civilities a few sentences were exchanged that served to establish the appearance of an amicable intercourse between the parties.

In the meanwhile, the gravity of Chingachgook remained immovable. He had seated himself more within the circle of light, where the frequent uneasy glances of his guests were better enabled to separate the natural expression of his face from the artificial terrors of the war-paint. They found a strong resemblance between father and son, with the difference that might be expected from age and hardships. The fierceness of his countenance now seemed to slumber, and in its place was to be seen the quiet, vacant composure which distinguishes an Indian warrior, when his faculties are not required for any of the greater purposes of his existence. It was, however, easy to be seen, by the occasional gleams that shot across his swarthy visage, that it was only necessary to arouse his passions in order to give full effect to the terrific device which he had adopted to intimidate his enemies. On the other hand, the quick roving eye of the scout seldom rested. He ate and drank with an appetite that no sense of danger could disturb, but his vigilance seemed never to desert him. Twenty times the gourd or the venison was suspended before his lips, while his head was turned aside, as though he listened to some distant and distrusted sounds—a movement that never failed to recall his guests from regarding the novelties of their situation to a collection of the alarming reasons that had driven them to seek it. As these frequent pauses were never followed by any remark, the

momentary uneasiness they created quickly passed away, and for a time was forgotten.

"Come, friend," said Hawkeye, drawing out a keg from beneath a cover of leaves, towards the close of the repast and addressing the stranger who sat at his elbow, doing great justice to his culinary skill, "try a little spruce; 'twill wash away all thoughts of the colt and quicken the life in your bosom. I drink to your better friendship, hoping that a little horse-flesh may leave no heartburnings atween us. How do you name yourself?"

"Gamut—David Gamut," returned the singing-master, preparing to wash down his sorrows in a powerful draught of the woodman's high-flavored and well-laced compound.

"A very good name, and, I dare say, handed down from honest forefathers. I'm an admirer of names, though the Christian fashions fall far below savage customs in this particular. The biggest coward I ever knew was called Lyon; and his wife, Patience, would scold you out of hearing in less time than a hunted deer would run a rod. With an Indian 'tis a matter of conscience; what he calls himself he generally is—not that Chingachgook, which signifies big serpent, is really a snake, big or little; but that he understands the windings and turnings of human nature, and is silent, and strikes his enemies when they least expect him. What may be your calling?"

"I am an unworthy instructor in the art of psalmody."

"Anan!"

"I teach singing the youths of the Connecticut levy."

"You might be better employed. The young hounds go laughing and singing too much already through the woods, when they ought not to breathe louder than a fox in his cover. Can you use the smooth bore or handle the rifle?"

"Praised be God, I have never had occasion to meddle with murderous implements!"

"Perhaps you understand the compass and lay down the water courses and mountains of the wilderness on paper, in

* The meaning of Indian words is much governed by the emphasis and tones.

order that they who follow may find places by their given names?"

"I practice no such employment."

"You have a pair of legs that might make a long path seem short; you journey sometimes, I fancy, with tidings for the general."

"Never; I follow no other than my own high vocation, which is instruction in sacred music!"

"'Tis a strange calling," muttered Hawkeye, with an inward laugh, "to go through life like a cat-bird, mocking all the ups and downs that may happen to come out of other men's throats. Well, friend, I suppose it is your gift and musn't be denied any more than if 'twas shooting or some other better inclination. Let us hear what you can do in that way; 'twill be a friendly manner of saying good night, for 'tis time that these ladies should be getting strength for a hard and a long push in the pride of the morning, afore the Maquas are stirring."

"With joyful pleasure do I consent," said David, adjusting his iron-rimmed spectacles and producing his beloved little volume, which he immediately tendered to Alice. "What can be more fitting and consolatory than to offer up evening praise after a day of such exceeding jeopardy!"

Alice smiled; but regarding Heyward, she blushed and hesitated.

"Indulge yourself," he whispered; "ought not the suggestion of the worthy namesake of the Psalmist to have its weight at such a moment?"

Encouraged by his opinion, Alice did what her pious inclinations and her keen relish for gentle sounds had before so strongly urged. The book was opened at a hymn not inadapated to their situation, and in which the poet, no longer goaded by his desire to excel the inspired King of Israel, had discovered some chastened and respectable powers. Cora betrayed a disposition to support her sister, and the sacred song proceeded, after the indispensable preliminaries of the pitch-pipe and the tune had been duly attended to by the methodical David.

The air was solemn and slow. At times it rose to the fullest compass of the rich

voices of the females, who hung over their little book in holy excitement, and again it sank so low that the rushing of the waters ran through their melody like a hollow accompaniment. The natural taste and true ear of David governed and modified the sounds to suit the confined cavern, every crevice and cranny of which was filled with the thrilling notes of their flexible voices. The Indians riveted their eyes on the rocks and listened with an attention that seemed to turn them into stone. But the scout, who had placed his chin in his hand, with an expression of cold indifference, gradually suffered his rigid features to relax, until, as verse succeeded verse, he felt his iron nature subdued, while his recollection was carried back to boyhood, when his ears had been accustomed to listen to similar sounds of praise in the settlements of the colony. His roving eyes began to moisten, and before the hymn was ended scalding tears rolled out of fountains that had long seemed dry, and followed each other down those cheeks that had oftener felt the storms of heaven than any testimonials of weakness. The singers were dwelling on one of those low, dying cords which the ear devours with such greedy rapture, as if conscious that it is about to lose them, when a cry, that seemed neither human nor earthly, rose in the outward air, penetrating not only the recesses of the cavern, but to the inmost hearts of all who heard it. It was followed by a stillness apparently as deep as if the waters had been checked in their furious progress at such a horrid and unusual interruption.

"What is it?" murmured Alice, after a few moments of terrible suspense.

"What is it?" repeated Heyward, aloud.

Neither Hawkeye nor the Indians made any reply. They listened, as if expecting the sound would be repeated, with a manner that expressed their own astonishment. At length they spoke together, earnestly, in the Delaware language, when Uncas, passing by the inner and most concealed aperture, cautiously left the cavern. When he had gone the scout first spoke in English.

"What is it, or what it is not, none here can tell, though two of us have ranged the words for more than thirty years. I did believe there was no cry that Indian or beast could make that my ears had not heard; but this has proved that I was only a vain and conceited mortal."

"Was it not, then, the shout the warriors make when they wish to intimidate their enemies?" asked Cora, who stood drawing her veil about her person with a calmness to which her agitated sister was a stranger.

"No, no; this was bad, and shocking, and had a sort of unhuman sound; but when you once hear the war-whoop, you will never mistake it for anything else. Well, Uncas!" speaking in Delaware to the young chief as he re-entered, "what see you? do our lights shine through the blankets?"

The answer was short, and apparently decided, being given in the same tongue.

"There is nothing to be seen without," continued Hawkeye, shaking his head in discontent; "and our hiding-place is still in darkness. Pass into the other cave, you that need it, and seek for sleep; we must be afoot long before the sun, and make the most of our time to get to Edward while the Mingoes are taking their morning nap."

Cora set the example of compliance with a steadiness that taught the more timid Alice the necessity of obedience. Before leaving the place, however, she whispered a request to Duncan that he would follow. Uncas raised the blanket for their passage, and as the sisters turned to thank him for this act of attention, they saw the scout seated again before the dying embers, with his face resting on his hands, in a manner which showed how deeply he brooded on the unaccountable interruption which had broken up their evening devotions.

Heyward took with him a blazing knot, which threw a dim light through the narrow vista of their new apartment. Placing it in a favorable position, he joined the females, who now found themselves alone with him for the first time

since they had left the friendly ramparts of Fort Edward.

"Leave us not, Duncan," said Alice; "we cannot sleep in such a place as this, with that horrid cry still ringing in our ears."

"First let us examine into the security of your fortress," he answered, "and then we will speak of rest."

He approached the further end of the cavern to an outlet which, like the others, was concealed by blankets, and removing the thick screen, breathed the fresh and reviving air from the cataract. One arm of the river flowed through a deep, narrow ravine, which its current had worn in the soft rock directly beneath his feet, forming an effectual defense, as he believed, against any danger from that quarter; the water, a few rods above them, plunging, glancing and sweeping along in its most violent and broken manner.

"Nature has made an impenetrable barrier on this side," he continued, pointing down the perpendicular declivity into the dark current, before he dropped the blanket; "and as you know that good men and true are on guard in front, I see no reason why the advice of our honest host should be disregarded. I am certain Cora will join me in saying that sleep is necessary to you both."

"Cora may submit to the justice of your opinion," though she cannot put it in practice," returned the elder sister, who had placed herself by the side of Alice, on a couch of sassafras; "there would be other causes to chase away sleep, though we had been spared the shock of this mysterious noise. Ask yourself, Heyward, can daughters forget the anxiety a father must endure whose children lodge he knows not where or how, in such a wilderness and in the midst of so many perils?"

"He is a soldier and knows how to estimate the chances of the woods."

"He is a father and cannot deny his nature."

"How kind has he ever been to all my follies! how tender and indulgent to all my wishes!" sobbed Alice. "We have

been selfish, sister, in urging our visit at such hazard."

"I may have been rash in pressing his consent in a moment of so much embarrassment; but I would have proved to him that however others might neglect him in his strait, his children at least were faithful."

"When he heard of your arrival at Edward," said Heyward, kindly, "there was a powerful struggle in his bosom between fear and love; though the latter, heightened, if possible, by so long a separation, quickly prevailed. 'It is the spirit of my noble-minded Cora that leads them, Duncan,' he said, 'and I will not balk it. Would to God that he who holds the honor of our royal master in his guardianship would show but half her firmness!'"

"And did he not speak of me, Heyward?" demanded Alice, with jealous affection. "Surely, he forgot not altogether his little Elsie?"

"That were impossible," returned the young man; "he called you by a thousand endearing epithets that I may not presume to use, but to the justice of which I can warmly testify. Once, indeed, he said——"

Duncan ceased speaking; for while his eyes were riveted on those of Alice, who had turned towards him with the eagerness of filial affection to catch his words, the same strong, horrid cry as before filled the air, and rendered him mute. A long, breathless silence succeeded, during which each looked at the others in fearful expectation of hearing the sound repeated. At length the blanket was slowly raised, and the scout stood in the aperture with a countenance whose firmness evidently began to give way before a mystery that seemed to threaten some danger against which all his cunning and experience might prove of no avail.

CHAPTER VII.

"They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,
I see them sit." —GRAY.

"'TWOULD be neglecting a warning that is given for our good to lie hid any

longer," said Hawkeye, "when such sounds are raised in the forest. These gentle ones may keep close, but the Mohicans and I will watch upon the rock, where I suppose a major of the 60th would wish to keep us company."

"Is then our danger so pressing?" asked Cora.

"He who makes strange sounds, and gives them out for man's information, alone knows our danger. I should think myself wicked unto rebellion against his will was I to burrow with such warnings in the air. Even the weak soul who passes his days in singing is stirred by the cry, and, as he says, is 'ready to go forth to the battle.' If 'twere only a battle, it would be a thing understood by us all, and easily managed; but I have heard that when such shrieks are atween heaven and 'arth, it betokens another sort of warfare."

"If all our reasons for fear, my friend, are confined to such as proceed from supernatural causes, we have but little occasion to be alarmed," continued the undisturbed Cora; "are you certain that our enemies have not invented some new and ingenious method to strike us with terror, that their conquest may become more easy?"

"Lady," returned the scout solemnly, "I have listened to all the sounds of the woods for thirty years, as a man will listen whose life and death depend on the quickness of his ears. There is no whine of the panther, no whistle of the cat-bird, nor any invention of the devilish Mingoes that can cheat me. I have heard the forest moan like mortal men in their affliction; often, and again, have I listened to the wind playing its music in the branches of the girdled trees; and I have heard the lightning cracking in the air, like the snapping of blazing brush as it spitted forth sparks and forked flames; but never have I thought that I heard more than the pleasure of him who sported with the things of his hand. But neither the Mohicans nor I, who am a white man without a cross, can explain the cry just heard. We, therefore, believe it a sign given for our good."

"It is extraordinary," said Heyward, taking his pistols from the place where he had laid them on entering; "be it a sign of peace or a signal of war, it must be looked to. Lead the way, my friend; I follow."

On issuing from their place of confinement, the whole party instantly experienced a grateful renovation of spirits by exchanging the pent air of the hiding-place for the cool and invigorating atmosphere which played around the whirlpools and pitches of the cataract. A heavy evening breeze swept along the surface of the river and seemed to drive the roar of the falls into the recesses of their own caverns, whence it issued heavily and constant, like thunder rumbling beyond the distant hills. The moon had risen and its light was already glancing here and there on the waters above them; but the extremity of the rock where they stood still lay in shadow. With the exception of the sounds produced by the rushing waters and an occasional breathing of the air, as it murmured past them in fitful currents, the scene was as still as night and solitude could make it. In vain were the eyes of each individual bent along the opposite shores in quest of some signs of life that might explain the nature of the interruption they had heard. Their anxious and eager looks were baffled by the deceptive light or rested only on naked rocks and straight and immovable trees.

"Here is nothing to be seen but the gloom and quiet of a lovely evening," whispered Duncan; "how much should we prize such a scene, and all this breathing solitude, at any other moment, Cora. Fancy yourself in security, and what now perhaps increases your terror may be made conducive to enjoyment——"

"Listen!" interrupted Alice.

The caution was unnecessary. Once more the same sound arose, as if from the bed of the river, and having broken out of the narrow bounds of the cliffs, was heard undulating through the forest in distant and dying cadences.

"Can any here give a name to such a cry?" demanded Hawkeye, when the last echo was lost in the woods; "if so, let him

speak; for myself, I judge it not to belong to 'arh!'"

"Here, then, is one who can undeceive you," said Duncan; "I know the sound full well, for often have I heard it on the field of battle and in situations which are frequent in a soldier's life. 'Tis the horrid shriek that a horse will give in his agony—oftener drawn from him in pain, though sometimes in terror. My charger is either a prey to the beasts of the forest or he sees his danger without the power to avoid it. The sound might deceive me in the cavern, but in the open air I know it too well to be wrong."

The scout and his companion listened to this simple explanation with the interest of men who imbibe new ideas at the same time that they get rid of old ones which had proved disagreeable inmates. The two latter uttered their usual and expressive exclamation, "Hugh!" as the truth first glanced upon their minds, while the former, after a short, musing pause, took upon himself to reply.

"I cannot deny your words," he said; "for I am little skilled in horses, though born where they abound. The wolves must be hovering above their heads on the bank, and the timorous creatures are calling on man for help in the best manner they are able. Uncas"—he spoke in Delaware—"Uncas, drop down in the canoe, and whirl a brand among the pack; or fear may do what the wolves can't get at to perform, and leave us without horses in the morning, when we shall have so much need to journey swiftly!"

The young native had already descended to the water to comply, when a long howl was raised on the edge of the river, and was borne swiftly off into the depths of the forest, as though the beasts, of their own accord, were abandoning their prey in sudden terror. Uncas, with instinctive quickness, receded, and the three foresters held another of their low, earnest conferences.

"We have been like hunters who have lost the points of the heavens, and from whom the sun has been held for days," said Hawkeye, turning away from his companions; "now we begin again to

know the signs of our course, and the paths are cleared from briers! Seat yourselves in the shade which the moon throws from yonder beach—'tis thicker than that of the pines—and let us wait for that which the Lord may choose to send next. Let all your conversation be in whispers; though it would be better, and perhaps, in the end, wiser, if each one held discourse with his own thoughts for a time."

The manner of the scout was seriously impressive, though no longer distinguished by any signs of unmanly apprehension. It was evident that his momentary weakness had vanished with the explanation of a mystery which his own experience had not served to fathom; and though he now felt all the realities of their actual condition, that he was prepared to meet them with the energy of his hardy nature. This feeling seemed also common to the natives, who placed themselves in positions which commanded a full view of both shores, while their own persons were effectually concealed from observation. In such circumstances, common prudence dictated that Heyward and his companions should imitate a caution that proceeded from so intelligent a source. The young man drew a pile of the sassafras from the cave, and placing it in the chasm which separated the two caverns, it was occupied by the sisters, who were thus protected by the rocks from any missiles, while their anxiety was relieved by the assurance that no danger could approach without a warning. Heyward himself was posted at hand, so near that he might communicate with his companions without raising his voice to a dangerous elevation; while David, in imitation of the woodsmen, bestowed his person in such a manner among the fissures of the rocks, that his ungainly limbs were no longer offensive to the eye.

In this manner hours passed by without further interruption. The moon reached the zenith, and shed its mild light perpendicularly on the lovely sight of the sisters slumbering peacefully in each other's arms. Duncan cast the wide shawl of Cora before a spectacle he so much loved to contemplate, and then suffered his own

head to seek a pillow on the rock. David began to utter sounds that would have shocked his delicate organs in more wakeful moments; in short, all but Hawkeye and the Mohicans lost every idea of consciousness in uncontrollable drowsiness. But the watchfulness of these vigilant protectors neither tired nor slumbered. Immovable as that rock of which each appeared to form a part, they lay, with their eyes roving, without intermission, along the dark margin of trees that bounded the adjacent shores of the narrow stream. Not a sound escaped them; the most subtle examination could not have told they breathed. It was evident that this excess of caution proceeded from an experience that no subtlety on the part of their enemies could deceive. It was, however, continued without any apparent consequences until the moon had set, and a pale streak above the tree-tops at the bend of the river a little below announced the approach of day.

Then, for the first time, Hawkeye was seen to stir. He crawled along the rock and shook Duncan from his heavy slumbers.

"Now is the time to journey," he whispered; "awake the gentle ones, and be ready to get into the canoe when I bring it to the landing-place."

"Have you had a quiet night?" said Heyward; "for myself, I believe sleep has got the better of my vigilance."

"All is yet still as midnight. Be silent, but be quick."

By this time Duncan was thoroughly awake, and he immediately lifted the shawl from the sleeping females. The motion caused Cora to raise her hand as if to repulse him, while Alice murmured, in her soft gentle voice, "No, no, dear father, we were not deserted; Duncan was with us!"

"Yes, sweet innocence," whispered the youth; "Duncan is here, and while life continues or danger remains, he will never quit thee. Cora! Alice! awake! The hour has come to move!"

A loud shriek from the younger of the sisters, and the form of the other standing upright before him, in bewildered

horror, was the unexpected answer he received. While the words were still on the lips of Heyward, there had arisen such a tumult of yells and cries as served to drive the swift currents of his own blood back from its bounding course into the fountains of his heart. It seemed, for near a minute, as if the demons of hell had possessed themselves of the air about them, and were venting their savage humors in barbarous sounds. The cries came from no particular direction, though it was evident they filled the woods, and, as the appalled listeners easily imagined, the caverns of the falls, the rocks, the bed of the river, and the upper air. David raised his tall person in the midst of the infernal din, with a hand on either ear, exclaiming—

“Whence comes this discord! Has hell broke loose, that man should utter sounds like these!”

The bright flashes and the quick reports of a dozen rifles, from the opposite banks of the stream, followed this incautious exposure of his person, and left the unfortunate singing master senseless on that rock where he had been so long slumbering. The Mohicans boldly sent back the intimidating yell of their enemies, who raised a shout of savage triumph at the fall of Gamut. The flash of rifles was then quick and close between them, but either party was too well skilled to leave even a limb exposed to the hostile aim. Duncan listened with intense anxiety for the strokes of the paddle, believing that flight was now their only refuge. The river glanced by with its ordinary velocity but the canoe was nowhere to be seen on its dark waters. He had just fancied they were cruelly deserted by the scout, as a stream of flame issued from the rock beneath him, and a fierce yell, blended with a shriek of agony, announced that the messenger of death, sent from the fatal weapon of Hawkeye, had found a victim. At this slight repulse the assailants instantly withdrew, and gradually the place became as still as before the sudden tumult.

Duncan seized the favorable moment to spring to the body of Gamut, which he

bore within the shelter of the narrow chasm that protected the sisters. In another minute the whole party was collected in this spot of comparative safety.

“The poor fellow has saved his scalp,” said Hawkeye, coolly passing his hand over the head of David; “but he is a proof that a man may be born with too long a tongue! ’Twas downright madness to show six feet of flesh and blood on a naked rock to the raging savages. I only wonder he has escaped with life.”

“Is he not dead?” demanded Cora, in a voice whose husky tones showed how powerfully natural horror struggled with her assumed firmness. “Can we do aught to assist the wretched man?”

“No, no! the life is in his heart yet, and after he has slept awhile he will come to himself, and be a wiser man for it, till the hour of his real time shall come,” returned Hawkeye, casting another oblique glance at the insensible body, while he filled his charger with admirable nicety. “Carry him in, Uncas, and lay him on the sassafras. The longer his nap lasts the better it will be for him, as I doubt whether he can find a proper cover for such a shape on these rocks; and singing won’t do any good with the Iroquois.”

“You believe, then, the attack will be renewed?” asked Heyward.

“Do I expect a hungry wolf will satisfy his craving with a mouthful! They have lost a man, and ’tis their fashion when they meet a loss and fail in the surprise to fall back; but we shall have them on again, with new expedients to circumvent us, and master our scalps. Our main hope,” he continued, raising his rugged countenance, across which a shade of anxiety just then passed like a darkening cloud, “will be to keep the rock until Munro can send a party to our help! God send it may be soon, and under a leader that knows the Indian customs!”

“You hear our probable fortunes, Cora,” said Duncan; “and you know we have everything to hope from the anxiety and experience of your father. Come, then, with Alice into this cavern, where you, at least, will be safe from the murderous rifles of our enemies, and where you may

bestow a care suited to your gentle natures on our unfortunate comrade."

The sisters followed him into the outer cave, where David was beginning by his sighs to give symptoms of returning consciousness; and then commending the wounded man to their attention, he immediately prepared to leave them.

"Duncan!" said the tremulous voice of Cora, when he had reached the mouth of the cavern. He turned and beheld the speaker, whose color had changed to a deadly paleness, and whose lip quivered, gazing after him with an expression of interest which immediately recalled him to her side. "Remember, Duncan, how necessary your safety is to our own—how you bear a father's sacred trust—how much depends on your discretion and care—in short," she added, while the tell-tale blood stole over her features, crimsoning her very temples, "how very deservedly dear you are to all of the name of Munro."

"If anything could add to my own base love of life," said Heyward, suffering his unconscious eyes to wander to the youthful form of the silent Alice, "it would be so kind an assurance. As major of the 60th, our honest host will tell you I must take my share of the fray; but our task will be easy; it is merely to keep these bloodhounds at bay for a few hours."

Without waiting for reply, he tore himself from the presence of the sisters and joined the scout and his companions, who still lay within the protection of the little chasm between the two caves.

"I tell you, Uncas," said the former, as Heyward joined them, "you are wasteful of your powder, and the kick of the rifle disconcerts your aim! Little powder, light lead, and a long arm, seldom fail of bringing the death screech from a Mingo! At least such has been my experience with the creatures. Come, friends; let us to our covers, for no man can tell when or where a Maqua* will strike his blow."

The Indians silently repaired to their

appointed stations, which were fissures in the rocks, whence they could command the approaches to the foot of the falls. In the center of the little island a few short and stunted pines had found root, forming a thicket, into which Hawkeye darted with the swiftness of a deer, followed by the active Duncan. Here they secured themselves, as well as circumstances would permit, among the shrubs and fragments of stone that were scattered about the place. Above them was a bare, rounded rock, on each side of which the water played its gambols and plunged into the abysses beneath in the manner already described. As the day had now dawned, the opposite shores no longer presented a confused outline, but they were able to look into the woods and distinguish objects beneath a canopy of gloomy pines.

A long and anxious watch succeeded, but without any further evidence of a renewed attack; and Duncan began to hope that their fire had proved more fatal than was supposed, and that their enemies had been effectually repulsed. When he ventured to utter this impression to his companion it was met by Hawkeye with an incredulous shake of the head.

"You know not the nature of a Maqua if you think he is so easily beaten back without a scalp!" he answered. "If there was one of the imps yelling this morning there were forty! and they know our number and quality too well to give up the chase so soon. Hist! look into the water above, just where it breaks over the rocks. I am no mortal, if the risky devils haven't swam down upon the very pitch, and, as bad luck would have it, they have hit the head of the island. Hist! man, keep close! or the hair will be off your crown in the turning of a knife!"

Heyward lifted his head from the cover and beheld what he justly considered a prodigy of rashness and skill. The river had worn away the edge of the soft rock in such a manner as to render its first pitch less abrupt and perpendicular than is usual at waterfalls. With no other guide than the ripple of the stream where it met the head of the island, a party of their insatiable foes had ventured into the

* It will be observed that Hawkeye applies different names to his enemies. Mingo and Maqua are terms of contempt, and Iroquois is a name given by the French. The Indians rarely use the same name when different tribes speak of each other.

current, and swam down upon this point, knowing the ready access it would give, if successful, to their intended victims. As Hawkeye ceased speaking, four human heads could be seen peering above a few logs of driftwood that had lodged on these naked rocks and which had probably suggested the idea of the practicability of the hazardous undertaking. At the next moment a fifth form was seen floating over the green edge of the fall, a little from the line of the island. The savage struggled powerfully to gain the point of safety, and, favored by the glancing water, he was already stretching forth an arm to meet the grasp of his companions when he shot away again with the whirling current, appeared to rise in the air, with up-lifted arms and starting eyeballs, and fell with a sudden plunge into that deep and yawning abyss over which he hovered. A single wild despairing shriek rose from the cavern and all was hushed again as the grave.

The first generous impulse of Duncan was to rush to the rescue of the hapless wretch; but he felt himself bound to the spot by the iron grasp of the immovable scout.

"Would ye bring certain death upon us by telling the Mingoes where we lie?" demanded Hawkeye sternly; "'tis a charge of powder saved, and ammunition is as precious now as breath to a worried deer! Freshen the priming of your pistols—the mist of the falls is apt to dampen the brimstone—and stand firm for a close struggle, while I fire on their rush."

He placed a finger in his mouth, and drew a long, shrill whistle, which was answered by the rocks that were guarded by the Mohicans. Duncan caught glimpses of heads above the scattered driftwood, as this signal rose on the air, but they disappeared again as suddenly as they had glanced upon his sight. A low, rustling sound next drew his attention behind him, and turning his head he beheld Uncas within a few feet, creeping to his side. Hawkeye spoke to him in Delaware, when the young chief took his position with singular caution and undisturbed coolness. To Heyward this was a moment

of feverish and impatient suspense; though the scout saw fit to select it as a fit occasion to read a lecture to his more youthful associates on the art of using fire-arms with discretion.

"Of all we'pons," he commenced, "the long-barreled, true-grooved, soft-metale rifle, is the most dangerous in skillful hands, though it wants a strong arm, a quick eye and great judgment in charging, to put forth all its beauties. The gunsmiths can have but little insight into their trade when they make their fowl-ing-pieces and short horsemen's ——"

He was interrupted by the low but expressive "hugh" of Uncas.

"I see them, boy, I see them!" continued Hawkeye; "they are gathering for the rush, or they would keep their dingy backs below the logs. Well, let them," he added, examining his flint; "the leading man certainly comes on to his death, though it should be Montcalm himself!"

At that moment the woods were filled with another burst of cries, and at the signal four savages sprang from the cover of the driftwood. Heyward felt a burning desire to rush forward to meet them, so intense was the delirious anxiety of the moment; but he was restrained by the deliberate examples of the scout and Uncas.

When their foes, who leaped over the black rocks that divided them with long bounds, uttering the wildest yells, were within a few rods, the rifle of Hawkeye slowly rose among the shrubs and poured out its fatal contents. The foremost Indian bounded like a stricken deer and fell headlong among the clefts of the island.

"Now, Uncas!" cried the scout, drawing his long knife, while his quick eyes began to flash with ardor, "take the last of the screeching imps; of the other two we are certain!"

He was obeyed; and but two enemies remained to be overcome. Heyward had given one of his pistols to Hawkeye, and together they rushed down a little declivity towards their foes; they discharged their weapons at the same instant and equally without success.

"I know'd it! and I said it!" muttered

the scout, whirling the despised little implement over the falls with bitter disdain. "Come on, ye bloody-minded hellhounds! ye meet a man without a cross!"

The words were barely uttered when he encountered a savage of gigantic stature and of the fiercest mien. At the same moment Duncan found himself engaged with the other in a similar contest of hand to hand. With ready skill, Hawkeye and his antagonist each grasped that uplifted arm of the other which held the dangerous knife. For near a minute they stood looking one another in the eye and gradually exerting the power of their muscles for the mastery. At length the toughened sinews of the white man prevailed over the less practiced limbs of the native. The arm of the latter slowly gave way before the increasing force of the scout, who, suddenly wresting his armed hand from his foe, drove the sharp weapon through his naked bosom to the heart.

In the meantime, Heyward had been pressed in a more deadly struggle. His slight sword was snapped in the first encounter. As he was destitute of any other means of defense, his safety now depended entirely on bodily strength and resolution. Though deficient in neither of these qualities, he had met an enemy every way his equal. Happily, he soon succeeded in disarming his adversary, whose knife fell on the rock at their feet; and from this moment it became a fierce struggle who should cast the other over the dizzy height into a neighboring cavern of the falls. Every successive struggle brought them nearer to the verge, where Duncan perceived the final and conquering effort must be made. Each of the combatants threw all his energies into that effort, and the result was, that both tottered on the brink of the precipice. Heyward felt the grasp of the other at his throat, and saw the grim smile the savage gave, under the revengeful hope that he hurried his enemy to a fate similar to his own, as he felt his body slowly yielding to a resistless power, and the young man experienced the passing agony of such a moment in all its horrors. At that instant of extreme danger, a dark hand and glancing knife appeared

before him; the Indian released his hold, as the blood flowed freely from around the severed tendons of his wrist; and while Duncan was drawn backward by the saving arm of Uncas, his charmed eyes were still riveted on the fierce and disappointed countenance of his foe, who fell sullenly and disappointed down the irrevocable precipice.

"To cover! to cover!" cried Hawkeye, who just then had dispatched his enemy; "to cover, for your lives! the work is but half ended!"

The young Mohican gave a shout of triumph, and, followed by Duncan, he glided up the acclivity they had descended to the combat, and sought the friendly shelter of the rocks and shrubs.

CHAPTER VIII.

They linger yet,
Avengers of their native land.

—GRAY.

THE warning call of the scout was not uttered without occasion. During the occurrence of the deadly encounter just related, the roar of the falls was unbroken by any human sound whatever. It would seem that interest in the result had kept the natives on the opposite shores in breathless suspense, while the quick evolutions and swift changes in the positions of the combatants effectually prevented a fire that might prove dangerous alike to friend and enemy. But the moment the struggle was decided, a yell rose as fierce and savage as wild and revengeful passions could throw into the air. It was followed by the swift flashes of the rifles, which sent their leaden messengers across the rock in volleys, as though the assailants would pour out their impotent fury on the insensible scene of the fatal contest.

A steady though deliberate return was made from the rifle of Chingachgook, who had maintained his post throughout the fray with unmoved resolution. When the triumphant shout of Uncas was borne to his ears, the gratified father raised his voice in a single responsive cry, after which his busy piece alone proved that he

still guarded his pass with unwearied diligence. In this manner many minutes flew by with the swiftness of thought; the rifles of the assailants speaking, at times, in rattling volleys, and at others, in occasional scattering shots. Though the rocks, the trees, and the shrubs, were cut and torn in a hundred places around the besieged, their cover was so close, and so rigidly maintained, that, as yet, David had been the only sufferer in their little band.

"Let them burn their powder," said the deliberate scout, while bullet after bullet whizzed by the place where he securely lay; "there will be a fine gathering of lead when it is over, and I fancy the imps will tire of the sport afore these old stones cry out for mercy! Uncas, boy, you waste your kernels by overcharging: and a kicking rifle never carries a true bullet. I told you to take that loping miscreant under the white paint; now, if your bullet went a hair's breadth, it went two inches above it. The life lies low in a Mingo, and humanity teaches us to make a quick end of the serpents."

A quiet smile lighted the haughty features of the young Mohican, betraying his knowledge of the English language as well as of the other's meaning; but he suffered it to pass away without vindication or reply.

"I cannot permit you to accuse Uncas of want of judgment or of skill," said Duncan; "he saved my life in the coolest and readiest manner, and he has made a friend who never will require to be reminded of the debt he owes."

Uncas partly raised his body and offered his hand to the grasp of Heyward. During this act of friendship the two young men exchanged looks of intelligence which caused Duncan to forget the character and condition of his wild associate. In the meanwhile Hawkeye, who looked on this burst of youthful feeling with a cool but kind regard, made the following reply:—

"Life is an obligation which friends often owe to each other in the wilderness. I dare say I may have served Uncas some such turn myself before now; and I very well remember that he has stood between

me and death five different times; three times from the Mingoes, once in crossing Horican, and——"

"That bullet was better aimed than common!" exclaimed Duncan, involuntarily shrinking from a shot which struck the rock at his side with a smart rebound.

Hawkeye laid his hand on the shapeless metal, and shook his head as he examined it, saying, "Falling lead is never flattened. Had it come from the clouds this might have happened."

But the rifle of Uncas was deliberately raised towards the heavens, directing the eyes of his companions to a point where the mystery was immediately explained. A ragged oak grew on the right bank of the river, nearly opposite to their position, which, seeking the freedom of the open space, had inclined so far forward that its upper branches overhung that arm of the stream which flowed nearest to its own shore. Among the topmost leaves, which scantily concealed the gnarled and stunted limbs, a savage was concealed by the trunk of the tree, and partly exposed, as though looking down upon them to ascertain the effect produced by his treacherous aim.

"These devils will scale heaven to circumvent us to our ruin," said Hawkeye; "keep him in play, boy, until I can bring 'kill-deer' to bear, when we will try his metal on each side of the tree at once."

Uncas delayed his fire until the scout uttered the word. The rifles flashed, the leaves and bark of the oak flew into the air and were scattered by the wind, but the Indian answered their assault by a taunting laugh, sending down upon them another bullet in return that struck the cap of Hawkeye from his head. Once more the savage yells burst out of the woods, and the leaden hail whistled above the heads of the besieged, as if to confine them to a place where they might become easy victims to the enterprise of the warrior who had mounted the tree.

"This must be looked to," said the scout, glancing about him with an anxious eye. "Uncas, call up your father; we have need of all our weapons to bring the cunning varment from his roost."

The signal was instantly given; and, before Hawkeye had reloaded his rifle, they were joined by Chingachgook. When his son pointed out to the experienced warrior the situation of their dangerous enemy, the usual exclamatory "Hugh" burst from his lips; after which no further expression of surprise or alarm was suffered to escape him. Hawkeye and the Mohicans conversed earnestly together in Delaware for a few moments, when each quietly took his post in order to execute the plan they had speedily devised.

The warrior in the oak had maintained a quick, though ineffectual fire, from the moment of his discovery. But his aim was interrupted by the vigilance of his enemies, whose rifles instantaneously bore on any part of his person that was left exposed. Still his bullets fell in the center of the crouching party. The clothes of Heyward, which rendered him peculiarly conspicuous, were repeatedly cut, and once blood was drawn from a slight wound in his arm.

At length, emboldened by the long and patient watchfulness of his enemies, the Huron attempted a better and more fatal aim. The quick eye of the Mohicans caught the dark line of his lower limbs incautiously exposed through the thin foliage, a few inches from the trunk of the tree. Their rifles made a common report, when, sinking on his wounded limb, part of the body of the savage came into view. Swift as thought, Hawkeye seized the advantage, and discharged his fatal weapon into the top of the oak. The leaves were unusually agitated; the dangerous rifle fell from its commanding elevation, and after a few moments of vain struggling, the form of the savage was seen swinging in the wind, while he still grasped a ragged and naked branch of the tree, with hands clenched in desperation.

"Give him, in pity give him the contents of another rifle," cried Duncan, turning away his eyes in horror from the spectacle of a fellow-creature in such awful jeopardy.

"Not a karnel!" exclaimed the obdurate Hawkeye; "his death is certain, and we have no powder to spare, for Indian

war sometimes lasts for days; 'tis their scalp or ours—and God, who made us, has put into our nature the craving to keep the skin on the head."

Against this stern and unyielding morality, supported as it was by such visible policy, there was no appeal. From that moment the yells in the forest once more ceased, the fire was suffered to decline, and all eyes, those of friends as well as enemies, became fixed on the hopeless condition of the wretch who was dangling between heaven and earth. The body yielded to the currents of air, and though no murmur or groan escaped the victim, there were instants when he grimly faced his foes, and the anguish of cold despair might be traced through the intervening distance, in possession of his swarthy lineaments. Three several times the scout raised his piece in mercy, and as often prudence getting the better of his intention, it was again silently lowered. At length one hand of the Huron lost its hold and dropped exhausted to his side. A desperate and fruitless struggle to recover the branch succeeded, and then the savage was seen for a fleeting instant grasping wildly at the empty air. The lightning is not quicker than was the flame from the rifle of Hawkeye; the limbs of the victim trembled and contracted, the head fell to the bosom, and the body parted the foaming waters like lead, when the element closed above it in its ceaseless velocity, and every vestige of the unhappy Huron was lost forever.

No shout of triumph succeeded this important advantage, but even the Mohicans gazed at each other in silent horror. A single yell burst from the woods, and all was again still. Hawkeye, who alone appeared to reason on the occasion, shook his head at his own momentary weakness, even uttering his self-disapprobation aloud.

"'Twas the last charge in my horn, and the last bullet in my pouch, and 'twas the act of a boy," he said; "what mattered it whether he struck the rock living or dead; feeling would soon be over. Uncas, lad, go down to the canoe and bring up the big horn; it is all the powder we have left,

and we shall need it to the last grain, or I am ignorant of the Mingo nature."

The young Mohican complied, leaving the scout turning over the useless contents of his pouch and shaking the empty horn with renewed discontent. From this unsatisfactory examination, however, he was soon called by a loud and piercing exclamation from Uncas that sounded, even to the unpracticed ears of Duncan, as the signal of some new and unexpected calamity. Every thought filled with apprehension for the precious treasure he had concealed in the cavern, the young man started to his feet, totally regardless of the hazard he incurred by such an exposure. As if actuated by a common impulse, his movement was imitated by his companions, and together they rushed down the pass to the friendly chasm with a rapidity that rendered the scattering fire of their enemies perfectly harmless. The unwonted cry had brought the sisters, together with the wounded David, from their place of refuge; and the whole party, at a single glance, was made acquainted with the nature of the disaster that had disturbed even the practiced stoicism of their youthful Indian protector.

At a short distance from the rock their little bark was to be seen floating across the eddy, towards the swift current of the river, in a manner which proved that its course was directed by some hidden agent. The moment this unwelcome sight caught the eye of the scout his rifle was leveled as by instinct, but the barrèl gave no answer to the bright sparks of the flint.

"'Tis too late, 'tis too late!" Hawkeye exclaimed, dropping the useless piece in bitter disappointment; "the miscreant has struck the rapid; and had we powder, it could hardly send the lead swifter than he now goes."

The adventurous Huron raised his head above the shelter of the canoe, and while it glided swiftly down the stream he waved his hand and gave forth the shout which was the known signal of success. His cry was answered by a yell and a laugh from the woods, as tauntingly exulting as if fifty demons were uttering

their blasphemies at the fall of some Christian soul.

"Well may you laugh, ye children of the devil," said the scout, seating himself on a projection of the rock and suffering his gun to fall neglected at his feet, "for the three quickest and truest rifles in these woods are no better than so many stalks of mullen or the last year's horns of a buck."

"What is to be done?" demanded Duncan, losing the first feeling of disappointment in a more manly desire for exertion; "what will become of us?"

Hawkeye made no other reply than by passing his finger around the crown of his head, in a manner so significant that none who witnessed the action could mistake its meaning.

"Surely, surely, our case is not so desperate!" exclaimed the youth; "the Hurons are not here; we may make good the caverns; we may oppose their landing."

"With what?" coolly demanded the scout. "The arrows of Uncas, or such tears as women shed! No, no; you are young, and rich, and have friends, and at such an age I know it is hard to die; but," glancing his eyes at the Mohicans, "let us remember we are men without a cross, and let us teach these natives of the forest that white blood can run as freely as red, when the appointed hour is come."

Duncan turned quickly in the direction indicated by the other's eyes, and read a confirmation of his worst apprehensions in the conduct of the Indians. Chingachgook, placing himself in a dignified posture on another fragment of the rock, had already laid aside his knife and tomahawk, and was in the act of taking the eagle's plume from his head and smoothing the solitary tuft of hair in readiness to perform its last and revolting office. His countenance was composed, though thoughtful, while his dark, gleaming eyes were gradually losing the fierceness of the combat in an expression better suited to the change he expected momentarily to undergo.

"Our case is not, cannot be, so hopeless," said Duncan; "even at this very

moment succor may be at hand. I see no enemies ! they have sickened of a struggle in which they risk so much with so little prospect of gain."

"It may be a minute, or it may be an hour, afore the wily serpents steal upon us, and it is quite in natur' for them to be lying within hearing at this very moment," said Hawkeye ; " but come they will, and in such a fashion as will leave us nothing to hope. Chingachgook"—he spoke in Delaware—" my brother, we have fought our last battle together, and the Maquas will triumph in the death of the sage man of the Mohicans, and of the pale-face, whose eyes can make night as day, and level the clouds to the mists of the springs."

"Let the Mingo women go weep over their slain !" returned the Indian, with characteristic pride and unmoved firmness ; " the Great Snake of the Mohicans has coiled himself in their wigwams, and has poisoned their triumph with the wailings of children, whose fathers have not returned ! Eleven warriors lie hid from the graves of their tribes since the snows have melted, and none will tell where to find them when the tongue of Chingachgook shall be silent ! Let them draw the sharpest knife, and whirl the swiftest tomahawk, for their bitterest enemy is in their hands. Uncas, topmost branch of a noble trunk, call on the cowards to hasten or their hearts will soften and they will change to women !"

"They look among the fishes for their dead !" returned the low, soft voice of the youthful chieftain ; " the Hurons float with the slimy eels ! They drop from the oaks like fruit that is ready to be eaten ! and the Delawares laugh !"

"Ay, ay," muttered the scout, who had listened to this peculiar burst of the natives with deep attention ; " they have warmed their Indian feelings, and they'll soon provoke the Maquas to give them a speedy end. As for me, who am of the whole blood of the whites, it is befitting that I should die as becomes my color, with no words of scoffing in my mouth and without bitterness at the heart !"

"Why die at all !" said Cora, advanc-

ing from the place where natural horror had, until the moment, held her riveted to the rock ; " the path is open on every side ; fly, then, to the woods, and call on God for succor ! Go, brave men, we owe you too much already ; let us no longer involve you in our hapless fortunes !"

"You but little know the craft of the Iroquois, lady, if you judge they have left the path open to the woods !" returned Hawkeye, who, however, immediately added in his simplicity : " the down-stream current, it is certain, might soon sweep us beyond the reach of their rifles or the sound of their voices."

"Then try the river. Why linger to add to the number of the victims of our merciless enemies ?"

"Why," repeated the scout, looking about him proudly, " because it is better for a man to die at peace with himself than to live haunted by an evil conscience ! What answer could we give Munro when he asked us where and how we left his children ?"

"Go to him and say that you left them with a message to hasten to their aid," returned Cora, advancing nigher to the scout in her generous ardor ; " that the Hurons bear them into the northern wilds, but that by vigilance and speed they may yet be rescued ; and if, after all, it should please heaven that his assistance come too late, bear to him," she continued, her voice gradually lowering, until it seemed nearly choked, " the blessings, the final prayers of his daughters, and bid him not mourn their early fate, but to look forward with humble confidence to the Christian's goal to meet his children."

The hard, weather-beaten features of the scout began to work, and when she had ended he dropped his chin to his hand, like a man musing profoundly on the nature of the proposal.

"There is reason in her words !" t length broke from his compressed and trembling lips ; " aye, and they bear the spirit of Christianity ; what might be right and proper in a red-skin may be sinful in a man who has not even a cross in blood to plead for his ignorance. Chin-

gachgook! Uncas! hear you the talk of the dark-eyed woman?"

He now spoke in Delaware to his companions, and his address, though calm and deliberate, seemed very decided. The elder Mohican heard him with deep gravity, and appeared to ponder on his words, as though he felt the importance of their import. After a moment of hesitation, he waved his hand in assent, and uttered the English word "Good," with the peculiar emphasis of his people. Then, placing his knife and tomahawk in his girdle, the warrior moved silently to the edge of the rock which was most concealed from the banks of the river. Here he paused a moment, pointing significantly to the woods below, and saying a few words in his own language, as if indicating his intended route, he dropped into the water, and sank from before the eyes of the witnesses of his movements.

The scout delayed his departure to speak to the generous girl, whose breathing became lighter as she saw the success of her remonstrance.

"Wisdom is sometimes given to the young, as well as to the old," he said; "and what you have spoken is wise, not to call it by a better word. If you are led into the woods—that is, such of you as may be spared for a while—break the twigs on the bushes as you pass, and make the marks of your trail as broad as you can, when, if mortal eyes can see them, depend on having a friend who will follow to the ends of the 'arth afore he desarts you."

He gave Cora an affectionate shake of the hand, lifted his rifle, and after regarding it a moment with melancholy solicitude laid it carefully aside and descended to the place where Chingachgook had just disappeared. For an instant he hung suspended by the rock; and looking about him, with a countenance of peculiar care, he added, bitterly, "Had the powder held out, this disgrace could never have befallen!" then, loosening his hold, the water closed above his head and he also became lost to view.

All eyes were now turned on Uncas, who stood leaning against the ragged

rock, in immovable composure. After waiting a short time, Cora pointed down the river, and said—

"Your friends have not been seen, and are now, most probably, in safety; is it not time for you to follow?"

"Uncas will stay," the young Mohican calmly answered in English.

"To increase the horror of our capture and to diminish the chances of our release! Go, generous young man," Cora continued, lowering her eyes under the gaze of the Mohican, and perhaps with an intuitive consciousness of her power; "go to my father, as I have said, and be the most confidential of my messengers. Tell him to trust you with the means to buy the freedom of his daughters. Go! 'tis my wish, 'tis my prayer, that you will go!"

The settled, calm look of the young chief changed to an expression of gloom, but he no longer hesitated. With a noiseless step he crossed the rock and dropped into the troubled stream. Hardly a breath was drawn by those he left behind until they caught a glimpse of his head emerging for air far down the current, when he again sank and was seen no more.

These sudden and apparently successful experiments had all taken place in a few minutes of that time which had now become so precious. After the last look at Uncas Cora turned, and, with a quivering lip, addressed herself to Heyward—

"I have heard of your boasted skill in the water, too, Duncan," she said; "follow, then, the wise example set you by these simple and faithful beings."

"Is such the faith that Cora Munro would exact from her protector?" said the young man, smiling mournfully, but with bitterness.

"This is not a time for idle subtleties and false opinions," she answered; "but a moment when every duty should be equally considered. To us you can be of no further service here, but your precious life may be saved for other and nearer friends."

He made no reply, though his eyes fell wistfully on the beautiful form of Alice, who was clinging to his arm with the dependency of an infant.

"Consider," continued Cora after a pause, during which she seemed to struggle with a pang even more acute than any that her fears had excited, "that the worst to us can be but death, a tribute that all must pay at the good time of God's appointment."

"There are evils worse than death," said Duncan, speaking hoarsely and as if fretful at her importunity, "but which the presence of one who would die in your behalf may avert."

Cora ceased her entreaties, and, veiling her face in her shawl, drew the nearly insensible Alice after her into the deepest recesses of the inner cavern.

CHAPTER IX.

"Be gay securely;
Dispel, my fair, with smiles, the tim'rous clouds
That hang on thy clear brow."

—DEATH OF AGRIPPINA.

THE sudden and almost magical change, from the stirring incidents of the combat to the stillness that now reigned around him, acted on the heated imagination of Heyward like some exciting dream. While all the images and events he had witnessed remained deeply impressed on his memory, he felt a difficulty in persuading himself of their truth. Still ignorant of the fate of those who had trusted to the aid of the swift current, he at first listened intently to any signal, or sounds of alarm, which might announce the good or evil fortune of their hazardous undertaking. His attention was, however, bestowed in vain; for, with the disappearance of Uncas, every sign of the adventurers had been lost, leaving him in total uncertainty of their fate.

In a moment of such painful doubt, Duncan did not hesitate to look about him, without consulting that protection from the rocks which just before had been so necessary to his safety. Every effort, however, to detect the least evidence of the approach of their hidden enemies, was as fruitless as the inquiry after his late companions. The wooded banks of the rivers seemed again deserted by everything possessing animal life. The uproar

which had so lately echoed through the vaults of the forest was gone, leaving the rush of the waters to swell and sink on the currents of the air in the unmingled sweetness of nature. A fish-hawk, which, secure on the topmost branches of a dead pine, had been a distant spectator of the fray, now stooped from his high and ragged perch, and soared in wide sweeps above his prey, while a jay, whose noisy voice had been stilled by the hoarser cries of the savages, ventured again to open his discordant throat, as though once more in undisturbed possession of his wild domains. Duncan caught from these natural accompaniments of the solitary scene a glimmering of hope; and he began to rally his faculties to renewed exertions with something like a reviving confidence of success.

"The Hurons are not to be seen," he said, addressing David, who had by no means recovered from the effects of the stunning blow he had received; "let us conceal ourselves in the cavern, and trust the rest to Providence."

"I remember to have united with two comely maidens, in lifting up our voices in praise and thanksgiving," returned the bewildered singing-master; "since which time I have been visited by a heavy judgment for my sins. I have been mocked with the likeness of sleep, while sounds of discord have rent my ears, such as might manifest the fullness of time, and that nature had forgotten her harmony."

"Poor fellow! thine own period was, in truth, near its accomplishment! But arouse, and come with me; I will lead you where all other sounds but those of your own psalmody shall be excluded."

"There is melody in the fall of the cataract, and the rushing of many waters is sweet to the senses," said David, pressing his hand confusedly on his brow. "Is not the air yet filled with shrieks and cries, as though the departed spirits of the damned ——"

"Not now, not now," interrupted the impatient Heyward, "they have ceased, and they who raised them, I trust in God, they are gone, too; everything but the water is still and at peace; in, then, where

you may create those sounds you love so well to hear."

David smiled sadly, though not without a momentary gleam of pleasure at this allusion to his beloved vocation. He no longer hesitated to be led to a spot which promised such unalloyed gratification to his wearied senses; and, leaning on the arm of his companion, he entered the narrow mouth of the cave. Duncan seized a pile of the sassafras, which he drew before the passage, studiously concealing every appearance of an aperture. Within this fragile barrier he arranged the blankets abandoned by the foresters, darkening the inner extremity of the cavern, while its outer received a chastened light from the narrow ravine, through which one arm of the river rushed to form the junction with its sister branch a few rods below.

"I like not that principle of the natives which teaches them to submit without a struggle in emergencies that appear desperate," he said, while busied in this employment; "our own maxim, which says, 'while life remains there is hope,' is more consoling, and better suited to a soldier's temperament. To you, Cora, I will urge no words of idle encouragement; your own fortitude and undisturbed reason will teach you all that may become your sex, but cannot we dry the tears of that trembling weeper on your bosom?"

"I am calmer, Duncan," said Alice, raising herself from the arms of her sister and forcing an appearance of composure through her tears; "much calmer now. Surely in this hidden spot we are safe, we are secret, free from injury; we will hope everything from those generous men who have risked so much already in our behalf."

"Now does our gentle Alice speak like a daughter of Munro!" said Heyward, pausing to press her hand as he passed towards the outer entrance of the cavern. "With two such examples of courage before him, a man would be ashamed to prove other than a hero." He then seated himself in the center of the cavern, grasping his remaining pistol with a hand convulsively clenched, while his contracting and frowning eye announced the

sullen desperation of his purpose. "The Hurons, if they come, may not gain our position so easily as they think," he lowly muttered; and dropping his head back against the rock, he seemed to await the result in patience, though his gaze was unceasingly bent on the open avenue to their place of retreat.

With the last sound of his voice a deep, a long and almost breathless silence succeeded. The fresh air of the morning had penetrated the recess, and its influence was gradually felt on the spirits of its inmates. As minute after minute passed by, leaving them in undisturbed security, the insinuating feeling of hope was gradually gaining possession of every bosom, though each one felt reluctant to give utterance to expectations that the next moment might fearfully destroy.

David alone formed an exception to these varying emotions. A gleam of light from the opening crossed his wan countenance, and fell upon the pages of the little volume, whose leaves he was again occupied in turning, as if searching for some song more fitted to their condition than any that had yet met his eye. He was, most probably, acting all this time under a confused recollection of the promised consolation of Duncan. At length, it would seem, his patient industry found its reward; for, without explanation or apology, he pronounced aloud the words "Isle of Wight," drew a long, sweet sound from his pitchpipe, and then ran through the preliminary modulations of the air, whose name he had just mentioned, with the sweeter tones of his own musical voice.

"May not this prove dangerous?" asked Cora, glancing her dark eye at Major Heyward.

"Poor fellow! his voice is too feeble to be heard amid the din of the falls," was the answer; "besides the cavern will prove his friend. Let him indulge his passion, since it may be done without hazard."

"Isle of Wight!" repeated David, looking about him with that dignity with which he had long been wont to silence the whispering echoes of his school; "'tis a brave tune, and set to solemn words; let it be sung with meet respect!"

After allowing a moment of stillness to enforce his discipline, the voice of the singer was heard in low, murmuring syllables, gradually stealing on the ear, until it filled the narrow vault with sounds rendered trebly thrilling by the feeble and tremulous utterance produced by his debility. The melody, which no weakness could destroy, gradually wrought its sweet influence on the senses of those who heard it. It even prevailed over the miserable travesty of the song of David which the singer had selected from a volume of similar effusions, and caused the sense to be forgotten in the insinuating harmony of the sounds. Alice unconsciously dried her tears, and bent her melting eyes on the pallid features of Gamut with an expression of chastened delight that she neither affected nor wished to conceal. Cora bestowed an approving smile on the pious efforts of the namesake of the Jewish prince, and Heyward soon turned his steady, stern look from the outlet of the cavern to fasten it with a milder character on the face of David; or to meet the wandering beams which at moments strayed from the humid eyes of Alice. The open sympathy of the listeners stirred the spirit of the votary of music, whose voice regained its richness and volume, without losing that touching softness which proved its secret charm. Exerting his renovated powers to their utmost, he was yet filling the arches of the cave with long and full tones, when a yell burst into the air without that instantly stilled his pious strains, choking his voice suddenly, as though his heart had literally bounded into the passage of his throat.

"We are lost!" exclaimed Alice throwing herself into the arms of Cora.

"Not yet, not yet," returned the agitated but undaunted Heyward; "the sound came from the center of the island, and it has been produced by the sight of their dead companions. We are not yet discovered, and there is still hope."

Faint and almost despairing as was the prospect of escape, the words of Duncan were not thrown away, for it awakened the powers of the sisters in such a manner that they awaited the result in

silence. A second yell soon followed the first, when a rush of voices was heard pouring down the island, from its upper to its lower extremity, until they reached the naked rock above the caverns, where, after a shout of savage triumph, the air continued full of horrible cries and screams such as man alone can utter, and he only when in a state of the fiercest barbarity.

The sounds quickly spread around them in every direction. Some called to their fellows from the water's edge, and were answered from the heights above. Cries were heard in the startling vicinity of the chasm between the two caves, which mingled with hoarser yells that arose out of the abyss of the deep ravine. In short, so rapidly had the savage sounds diffused themselves over the barren rock, that it was not difficult for the anxious listeners to imagine they could be heard beneath, as in truth they were above, and on every side of them.

In the midst of this tumult a triumphant yell was raised within a few yards of the hidden entrance to the cave. Heyward abandoned every hope, with the belief that it was the signal that they were discovered. Again the impression passed away as he heard the voices collect near the spot where the white man had so reluctantly abandoned his rifle. Amid the jargon of the Indian dialects that he now plainly heard it was easy to distinguish not only words, but sentences, in the patois of the Canadas. A burst of voices had shouted simultaneously, "*La longue Carabine!*" causing the opposite woods to re-echo with a name which Heyward well remembered had been given by his enemies to a celebrated hunter and scout of the English camp, and who, he now learnt for the first time, had been his late companion.

"*La longue Carabine! La longue Carabine!*" passed from mouth to mouth, until the whole band appeared to be collected around a trophy which would seem to announce the death of its formidable owner. After a vociferous consultation, which was at times deafened by bursts of savage joy, they again separated, filling the air with the name of a foe whose body, Heyward

could collect from their expressions, they hoped to find concealed in some crevice of the island.

"Now," he whispered to the trembling sisters, "now is the moment of uncertainty! if our place of retreat escape this scrutiny, we are still safe! In every event, we are assured, by what has fallen from our enemies, that our friends have escaped, and in two short hours we may look for succor from Webb."

There were now a few minutes of fearful stillness, during which Heyward well knew that the savages conducted their search with greater vigilance and method. More than once he could distinguish their footsteps as they brushed the sassafras, causing the faded leaves to rustle and the branches to snap. At length the pile yielded a little, a corner of a blanket fell, and a faint ray of light gleamed into the inner part of the cave. Cora folded Alice to her bosom in agony and Duncan sprang to his feet. A shout was at that moment heard, as if issuing from the center of the rock, announcing that the neighboring cavern had at length been entered. In a minute the number and loudness of the voices indicated that the whole party was collected in and around that secret place.

As the inner passages of the two caves were so close to each other, Duncan, believing that escape was no longer possible, passed David and the sisters, to place himself between the latter and the first onset of the terrible meeting. Grown desperate by his situation, he drew nigh the slight barrier which separated him only by a few feet from his relentless pursuers, and placing his face to the casual opening, he even looked out, with a sort of desperate indifference, on their movements.

Within reach of his arm was the brawny shoulder of a gigantic Indian, whose deep and authoritative voice appeared to give directions to the proceedings of his fellows. Beyond him again, Duncan could look into the vault opposite, which was filled with savages, overturning and rifling the humble furniture of the scout. The wound of David had dyed the leaves of sassafras with a color that the natives well knew was anticipating the season. Over this

sign of their success they set up a howl, like an opening from so many hounds who had recovered a lost trail. After this yell of victory, they tore up the fragrant bed of the cavern, and bore the branches into the chasm, scattering the boughs, as if they suspected them of concealing the person of the man they had so long hated and feared. One fierce and wild-looking warrior approached the chief, bearing a load of the brush, and pointing, exultingly, to the deep red stains with which it was sprinkled, uttered his joy in Indian yells, whose meaning Heyward was only enabled to comprehend by the frequent repetition of the name of "La longue Carabine!" When his triumph had ceased, he cast the brush on the slight heap that Duncan had made before the entrance of the second cavern, and closed the view. His example was followed by others, who, as they drew the branches from the cave of the scout, threw them into one pile, adding, unconsciously, to the security of those they sought. The very slightness of the defense was its chief merit, for no one thought of disturbing a mass of brush, which all of them believed, in that moment of hurry and confusion, had been accidentally raised by the hands of their own party.

As the blankets yielded before the outward pressure, and the branches settled in the fissure of the rock by their own weight, forming a compact body, Duncan once more breathed freely. With a light step, and lighter heart, he returned to the center of the cave and took the place he had left, where he could command a view of the opening next the river. While he was in the act of making this movement, the Indians, as if changing their purpose by a common impulse, broke away from the chasm in a body, and were heard rushing up the island again, towards the point whence they had originally descended. Here another wailing cry betrayed that they were again collecting around the bodies of their dead comrades.

Duncan now ventured to look at his companions, for, during the most critical moments of their danger, he had been

apprehensive that the anxiety of his countenance might communicate some additional alarm to those who were so little able to sustain it.

"They are gone, Cora," he whispered; "Alice, they are returned whence they came, and we are saved. To heaven, that has alone delivered us from the grasp of so merciless an enemy, be all the praise!"

"Then to heaven will I return my thanks," exclaimed the younger sister, rising from the encircling arms of Cora, and casting herself with enthusiastic gratitude on the naked rock; "to that heaven who has spared the tears of a gray-headed father, has saved the lives of those I so much love——"

Both Heyward and the more even-tempered Cora witnessed the act of involuntary emotion with powerful sympathy, the former secretly believing that piety had never worn a form so lovely as it had now assumed in the youthful person of Alice. Her eyes were radiant with the glow of grateful feelings; the flush of her beauty was again seated on her cheeks, and her whole soul seemed ready and anxious to pour out its thanksgivings through the medium of her eloquent features. But when her lips moved, the words they should have uttered appeared frozen by some new and sudden chill. Her bloom gave place to the paleness of death; her soft melting eyes grew hard, and seemed contracting with horror; while those hands which she had raised, clasped in each other, towards heaven, dropped in horizontal lines before her, the fingers pointed forward in convulsed motion. Heyward turned the instant she gave a direction to his suspicions, and, peering just above the ledge which formed the threshold of the open outlet of the cavern, he beheld the malignant, fierce and savage features of Le Renard Subtil.

In that moment of surprise the self-possession of Heyward did not desert him. He observed by the vacant expression of the Indian's countenance that his eye, accustomed to the open air, had not yet been able to penetrate the dusky light which pervaded the depth of the cavern.

He had even thought of retreating beyond a curvature in the natural wall, which might still conceal him and his companions, when, by the sudden gleam of intelligence that shot across the features of the savage, he saw that it was too late, and that they were betrayed.

The look of exultation and brutal triumph which announced this terrible truth was irresistibly irritating. Forgetful of everything but the impulses of his hot blood, Duncan leveled his pistol and fired. The report of the weapon made the cavern bellow like an eruption from a volcano; and when the smoke it vomited had been driven away before the current of air which issued from the ravine, the place so lately occupied by the features of his treacherous guide was vacant. Rushing to the outlet, Heyward caught a glimpse of his dark figure stealing around a low and narrow ledge, which soon hid him from sight.

Among the savages a frightful stillness succeeded the explosion, which had just been heard bursting from the bowels of the rock. But when Le Renard raised his voice in a long and intelligible whoop, it was answered by a spontaneous yell from the mouth of every Indian within hearing of the sound. The clamorous noises again rushed down the island; and before Duncan had time to recover from the shock, his feeble barrier of brush was scattered to the winds, the cavern was entered at both extremities, and he and his companions were dragged from their shelter and borne into the day, where they stood surrounded by the whole band of the triumphant Hurons.

CHAPTER X.

"I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatched!"
—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

THE instant the shock of this sudden misfortune had abated, Duncan began to make his observations on the appearance and proceedings of their captors. Contrary to the usages of the natives in the wantonness of their success, they had

respected, not only the persons of the trembling sisters, but his own. The rich ornaments of his military attire had indeed been repeatedly handled by different individuals of the tribe with eyes expressing a savage longing to possess the baubles; but before the customary violence could be resorted to, a mandate, in the authoritative voice of the large warrior already mentioned, stayed the uplifted hand and convinced Heyward that they were to be reserved for some object of particular moment.

While, however, these manifestations of weakness were exhibited by the young and vain of the party, the more experienced warriors continued their search throughout both caverns with an activity that denoted they were far from being satisfied with those fruits of their conquest which had already been brought to light. Unable to discover any new victim, these diligent workers of vengeance soon approached their male prisoners, pronouncing the name of "*La longue Carabine*," with a fierceness that could not easily be mistaken. Duncan affected not to comprehend the meaning of their repeated and violent interrogatories, while his companion was spared the effort of a similar deception by his ignorance of French. Wearied, at length, by their importunities, and apprehensive of irritating his captors by too stubborn a silence, the former looked about him in quest of Magua, who might interpret his answer to questions which were, at each moment, becoming more earnest and threatening.

The conduct of this savage had formed a solitary exception to that of all his fellows. While the others were busily occupied in seeking to gratify their childish passion for finery by plundering even the miserable effects of the scout, or had been searching, with such bloodthirsty vengeance in their looks, for their absent owner, Le Renard had stood a little distance from the prisoners, with a demeanor so quiet and satisfied as to betray that he had already effected the grand purpose of his treachery. When the eyes of Heyward first met those of his recent guide, he turned them away in horror at the

sinister though calm look he encountered. Conquering his disgust, however, he was able, with an averted face, to address his successful enemy.

"*Le Renard Subtil* is too much of a warrior," said the reluctant Heyward, "to refuse telling an unarmed man what his conquerors say."

"They ask for the hunter who knows the path through the woods," returned Magua, in his broken English, laying his hand, at the same time, with a ferocious smile, on the bundle of leaves with which a wound on his own shoulder was bandaged. "*La longue Carabine*! his rifle is good, and his eye never shut; but, like the short gun of the white chief, it is nothing against the life of *Le Subtil*."

"*Le Renard* is too brave to remember the hurts received in war, or the hands that gave them."

"Was it war, when the tired Indian rested at the sugar-tree to taste his corn? Who filled the bushes with creeping enemies, who drew the knife? whose tongue was peace, while his heart was covered with blood? Did Magua say that the hatchet was out of the ground, and that his hands had dug it up?"

As Duncan dared not retort upon his accuser by reminding him of his own premeditated treachery, and disdained to deprecate his resentment by any words of apology, he remained silent. Magua seemed also content to rest the controversy as well as all further communication there, for he resumed the leaning attitude against the rock from which, in momentary energy, he had arisen. But the cry of "*La longue Carabine*" was renewed the instant the impatient savages perceived that the short dialogue was ended.

"You hear," said Magua, with stubborn indifference; "the red Hurons call for the life of '*The Long Rifle*,' or they will have the blood of them that keep him hid."

"He is gone—escaped; he is far beyond their reach."

Renard smiled with cold contempt as he answered—

"When the white man dies, he thinks

he is at peace; but the red men know how to torture even the ghosts of their enemies. Where is his body? Let the Hurons see his scalp!

"He is not dead, but escaped."

Magua shook his head incredulously.

"Is he a bird, to spread his wings; or is he a fish, to swim without air? The white chief reads in his books, and he believes the Hurons are fools."

"Though no fish, 'The Long Rifle' can swim. He floated down the stream when the powder was all burnt and when the eyes of the Hurons were behind a cloud."

"And why did the white chief stay?" demanded the still incredulous Indian. "Is he a stone that goes to the bottom, or does the scalp burn his head?"

"That I am not a stone, your dead comrade, who fell into the falls, might answer, were the life still in him," said the provoked young man, using, in his anger, that boastful language which was most likely to excite the admiration of an Indian. "The white man thinks none but cowards desert their women."

Magua uttered a few words, inaudibly, between his teeth, before he continued, aloud—

"Can the Delawares swim, too, as well as crawl in the bushes? Where is 'Le gros Serpent'?"

Duncan, who perceived by the use of these Canadian appellations that his late companions were much better known to his enemies than to himself, answered reluctantly, "He also is gone down with the water."

"'Le Cerf agile' is not here!"

"I know not whom you call 'The Nimble Deer,'" said Duncan, gladly profiting by any excuse to create delay.

"Uncas," returned Magua, pronouncing the Delaware name with even greater difficulty than he spoke his English words. "'Bounding Elk' is what the white man says, when he calls to the young Mohican."

"Here is some confusion in names between us, Le Renard," said Duncan, hoping to provoke a discussion. "Daim is the French for deer, and cerf for stag; elan is the true term, when one would speak of an elk."

"Yes," muttered the Indian, in his native tongue; "the pale-faces are prattling women! they have two words for each thing, while a red-skin will make the sound of his voice speak for him." Then changing his language, he continued, adhering to the imperfect nomenclature of his provincial instructors, "The deer is swift, but weak; the elk is swift, but strong; and the son of 'Le Serpent' is 'Le Cerf agile.' Has he leaped the river to the woods?"

"If you mean the younger Delaware, he too is gone down with the water."

As there was nothing improbable to an Indian in the manner of the escape, Magua admitted the truth of what he had heard with a readiness that afforded additional evidence how little he would prize such worthless captives. With his companions, however, the feeling was manifestly different.

The Hurons had awaited the result of this short dialogue with characteristic patience and with a silence that increased until there was a general stillness in the band. When Heyward ceased to speak they turned their eyes as one man on Magua, demanding, in this expressive manner, an explanation of what had been said. Their interpreter pointed to the river and made them acquainted with the result as much by the action as by the few words he uttered. When the fact was generally understood the savages raised a frightful yell, which declared the extent of their disappointment. Some ran furiously to the water's edge, beating the air with frantic gestures, while others spat upon the element, to resent the supposed treason it had committed against their acknowledged rights as conquerors. A few, and they not the least powerful and terrific of the band, threw lowering looks, in which the fiercest passion was only tempered by habitual self-command, at those captives who still remained in their power; while one or two even gave vent to their malignant feelings by the most menacing gestures, against which neither the sex nor the beauty of the sisters was any protection. The young soldier made a desperate but fruitless effort to spring to

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the side of the rock. He saw the dark hand of a savage twisted in the rich tresses which were flowing in volumes over her shoulders, while a knife was passed around the head from which they fell, as if to denote the horrid manner in which it was about to be robbed of its beautiful ornament. But his hands were bound, and at the first movement he made he felt the grasp of the powerful Indian who directed the band pressing his shoulder like a vice. Immediately conscious how unavailing any struggle against such an overwhelming force must prove, he submitted to his fate, encouraging his gentle companions by a few low and tender assurances that the natives seldom failed to threaten more than they performed.

But, while Duncan resorted to these words of consolation to quiet the apprehensions of the sisters, he was not so weak as to deceive himself. He well knew that the authority of an Indian chief was so little conventional, that it was oftener maintained by physical superiority than by any moral supremacy he might possess. The danger was, therefore, magnified exactly in proportion to the number of the savage spirits by which they were surrounded. The most positive mandate from him who seemed the acknowledged leader was liable to be violated at each moment by any rash hand that might chose to sacrifice a victim to the manes of some dead friend or relative. While, therefore, he sustained an outward appearance of calmness and fortitude, his heart leaped into his throat whenever any of their fierce captors drew nearer than common to the helpless sisters or fastened one of their sullen, wandering looks on those fragile forms which were so little able to resist the slightest assault.

His apprehensions were, however, greatly relieved when he saw that the leader had summoned his warriors to himself in council. Their deliberations were short, and it would seem, by the silence of most of the party, the decision unanimous. By the frequency with which the few speakers pointed in the direction of the encampment of Webb, it was apparent

they dreaded the approach of danger from that quarter. This consideration probably hastened their determination, and quickened the subsequent movements.

During this short conference, Heyward, finding a respite from his greatest fears, had leisure to admire the cautious manner in which the Hurons had made their approaches, even after hostilities had ceased.

It has already been stated that the upper half of the island was a naked rock, and destitute of any other defenses than a few scattered logs of driftwood. They had selected this point to make their descent, having borne the canoe through the wood around the cataract for that purpose. Placing their arms in the little vessel, a dozen men, clinging to its sides, had trusted themselves to the direction of the canoe, which was controlled by two of the most skillful warriors in attitudes that enabled them to command a view of the dangerous passage. Favored by this arrangement, they touched the head of the island at that point which had proved so fatal to their first adventure, but with the advantages of superior numbers and the possession of fire-arms. That such had been the manner of their descent was rendered quite apparent to Duncan; for they now bore the light bark from the upper end of the rock, and placed it in the water, near the mouth of the outer cavern. As soon as this change was made, the leader made signs to the prisoners to descend and enter.

As resistance was useless, Heyward set the example of submission by leading the way into the canoe, where he was soon seated with the sisters, and the still wondering David. Notwithstanding the Hurons were necessarily ignorant of the little channels among the eddies and rapids of the streams, they knew the common signs of such a navigation too well to commit any material blunder. When the pilot chosen for the task of guiding the canoe had taken his station, the whole band plunged again into the river, the vessel glided down the current, and in a few moments the captives found themselves on the south bank of the stream, nearly opposite to the point where they had struck it the preceding evening.

Here was held another short but earnest consultation, during which the horses, to whose panic their owners ascribed their heaviest misfortune, were led from the cover of the woods and brought to the sheltered spot. The band now divided. The great chief so often mentioned mounting the charger of Heyward, led the way directly across the river, followed by most of his people, and disappeared in the woods, leaving the prisoners in charge of six savages, at whose head was Le Renard Subtil. Duncan witnessed all their movements with renewed uneasiness.

He had been fond of believing, from the uncommon forbearance of the savages, that he was reserved as a prisoner to be delivered to Montcalm. As the thoughts of those who are in misery seldom slumber and the invention is never more lively than when it is stimulated by hope, however feeble and remote, he had even imagined that the parental feelings of Munro were to be made instrumental in seducing him from his duty to the king. For though the French commander bore a high character for courage and enterprise, he was also thought to be expert in those political practices which do not always respect the nicer obligations of morality, and which so generally disgraced the European diplomacy of that period.

All those busy and ingenious speculations were now annihilated by the conduct of his captors. That portion of the band who had followed the huge warrior took the route towards the foot of the Horican, and no other expectation was left for himself and companions than that they were to be retained as hopeless captives by their savage conquerors. Anxious to know the worst, and willing in such an emergency to try the potency of gold, he overcame his reluctance to speak to Magua. Addressing himself to his former guide, who had now assumed the authority and manner of one who was to direct the future movements of the party, he said in tones as friendly and confident as he could assume—

"I would speak to Magua what is fit only for so great a chief to hear."

The Indian turned his eyes on the young soldier scornfully as he answered—"Speak; trees have no ears!"

"But the red Hurons are not deaf; and counsel that is fit for the great men of a nation would make the young warriors drunk. If Magua will not listen the officer of the king knows how to keep silent."

The savage spoke carelessly to his comrades, who were busied, after their awkward manner, in preparing the horses for the reception of the sisters, and moved a little to one side, whither, by a cautious gesture, he induced Heyward to follow.

"Now speak," he said; "if the words are such as Magua should hear."

"Le Renard Subtil has proved himself worthy of the honorable name given to him by his Canada fathers," commenced Heyward; "I see his wisdom and all that he has done for us, and shall remember it when the hour to reward him arrives. Yes! Renard has proved that he is not only a great chief in council, but one who knows how to deceive his enemies!"

"What has Renard done?" coldly demanded the Indian.

"What! has he not seen that the woods were filled with outlying parties of the enemies, and that the Serpent could not steal through them without being seen? Then, did he not lose his path to blind the eyes of the Hurons? Did he not pretend to go back to his tribe, who had treated him ill, and driven him from their wigwams like a dog? And, when we saw what he wished to do, did we not aid him, by making a false face, that the Hurons might think the white man believed that his friend was his enemy? Is not all this true? And when Le Subtil had shut the eyes and stopped the ears of his nation by his wisdom, did they not forget that they had once done him wrong and forced him to flee to the Mohawks? And did they not leave him on the south side of the river with their prisoners, while they have gone foolishly on the north? Does not Renard mean to turn like a fox on his footsteps, and carry to the rich and gray-

headed Scotchman his daughters? Yes, Magua, I see it all, and I have already been thinking how so much wisdom and honesty should be repaid. First, the chief of William Henry will give as a great chief should for such a service. The medal * of Magua will no longer be of tin, but of beaten gold; his horn will run over with powder; dollars will be as plenty in his pouch as pebbles on the shores of Horican; and the deer will lick his hand, for they will know it to be vain to fly from the rifle he will carry! As for myself, I know not how to exceed the gratitude of the Scotchman, but I—yes, I will—”

“What will the young chief, who comes from towards the sun, give?” demanded the Huron, observing that Heyward hesitated in his desire to end the enumeration of benefits with that which might form the climax of an Indian’s wishes.

“He will make the firewater from the islands in the salt lake flow before the wigwam of Magua until the heart of the Indian shall be lighter than the feathers of the humming bird, and his breath sweeter than the wild honeysuckle.”

Le Renard had listened gravely as Heyward slowly proceeded in the subtle speech. When the young man mentioned the artifice he supposed the Indian to have practiced on his own nation, the countenance of the listener was veiled in an expression of cautious gravity. At the allusion to the injury which Duncan affected to believe had driven the Huron from his native tribe, a gleam of such ungovernable ferocity flashed from the other’s eyes as induced the adventurous speaker to believe that he had struck the proper chord. And by the time he reached the part where he so artfully blended the thirst of vengeance with the desire of gain, he had at least obtained a command of the deepest attention of the savage. The question put by Le Renard had been calm and with all the dignity of an Indian,

but it was quite apparent by the thoughtful expression of the listener’s countenance that the answer was most cunningly devised. The Huron mused a few moments and then, laying his hand on the rude bandages of his wounded shoulder, he said with some energy—

“Do friends make such marks?”

“Would ‘La longue Carabine’ cut one so light on an enemy?”

“Do the Delawares crawl upon those they love like snakes, twisting themselves to strike?”

“Would ‘Le gros Serpent’ have been heard by the ears of one he wished to be deaf?”

“Does the white chief burn his powder in the faces of his brothers?”

“Does he ever miss his aim, when seriously bent to kill?” returned Duncan, smiling with well-acted sincerity.

Another long and deliberate pause succeeded these sententious questions and ready replies. Duncan saw that the Indian hesitated. In order to complete his victory, he was in the act of recommencing the enumeration of the rewards, when Magua made an expressive gesture, and said—

“Enough; Le Renard is a wise chief, and what he does will be seen. Go, and keep the mouth shut. When Magua speaks, it will be the time to answer.”

Heyward, perceiving that the eyes of his companion were warily fastened on the rest of the band, fell back immediately, in order to avoid the appearance of any suspicious confederacy with their leader. Magua approached the horses, and affected to be well pleased with the diligence and ingenuity of his comrades. He then signed to Heyward to assist the sisters into the saddles, for he seldom deigned to use the English tongue, unless urged by some motive of more than usual moment.

There was no longer any plausible pretext for delay, and Duncan was obliged, however reluctantly, to comply. As he performed this office, he whispered his reviving hopes in the ears of the trembling females, who, through dread of encountering the savage countenances of their captors, seldom raised their eyes from the ground. The mare of David had been

* It has long been a practice with the whites to conciliate the important men of the Indians by presenting medals, which are worn in the place of their own rude ornaments. Those given by the English generally bear the impression of the reigning king, and those given by the Americans that of the president.

taken with the followers of the large chief; in consequence, its owner, as well as Duncan, were compelled to journey on foot. The latter did not, however, so much regret this circumstance, as it might enable him to retard the speed of the party; for he still turned his longing looks in the direction of Fort Edward, in the vain expectation of catching some sound from that quarter of the forest which might denote the approach of succor.

When all were prepared, Magua made the signal to proceed, advancing in front to lead the party in person. Next followed David, who was gradually coming to a true sense of his condition as the effects of the wound became less and less apparent. The sisters rode in his rear, with Heyward at their side, while the Indians flanked the party, and brought up the close of the march with a caution that seemed never to tire.

In this manner they proceeded in uninterrupted silence, except when Heyward addressed some solitary word of comfort to the females, or David gave vent to the moanings of his spirit in piteous exclamations, which he intended should express the humility of resignation. Their direction lay towards the south, and in a course nearly opposite to the road to William Henry. Notwithstanding the apparent adherence in Magua to the original determination of his conquerors, Heyward could not believe his tempting bait was so soon forgotten; and he knew the windings of an Indian path too well to suppose that its apparent course led directly to its object, when artifice was at all necessary. Mile after mile was, however, passed through the boundless woods, in this painful manner, without any prospect of a termination to their journey. Heyward watched the sun, as he darted his meridian rays through the branches of the trees, and pined for the moment when the policy of Magua should change their route to one more favorable to his hopes. Sometimes he fancied the wary savage, despairing of passing the army of Montcalm in safety, was holding his way towards a well-known border settlement, where a distinguished officer of the crown,

and a favored friend of the Six Nations, held his large possessions as well as his usual residence. To be delivered into the hands of Sir William Johnson was far preferable to being led into the wilds of Canada; but in order to effect even the former, it would be necessary to traverse the forest for many weary leagues, each step of which was carrying him further from the scene of the war, and, consequently, from the post, not only of honor, but of duty.

Cora alone remembered the parting injunctions of the scout, and whenever an opportunity offered, she stretched forth her arm to bend aside the twigs that met her hands. But the vigilance of the Indians rendered this act of precaution both difficult and dangerous. She was often defeated in her purpose by encountering the watchful eyes, when it became necessary to feign an alarm she did not feel, and occupy the limb by some gesture of feminine apprehension. Once and once only was she completely successful; when she broke down the bough of a large sumach, and, by a sudden thought, let her glove fall at the same instant. This sign, intended for those that might follow, was observed by one of her conductors, who restored the glove, broke the remaining branches of the bush in such a manner that it appeared to proceed from the struggling of some beast in its branches, and then laid his hand on his tomahawk with a look so significant that it put an effectual end to these stolen memorials of their passage.

As there were horses to leave the prints of their footsteps, in both bands of the Indians, this interruption cut off any probable hopes of assistance being conveyed through the means of their trail.

Heyward would have ventured a remonstrance, had there been anything encouraging in the gloomy reserve of Magua. But the savage, during all this time, seldom turned to look at his followers, and never spoke. With the sun for his only guide, or aided by such blind marks as are only known to the sagacity of a native, he held his way along the barrens of pine, through occasional little fertile vales, across brooks

and rivulets, and over undulating hills, with the accuracy of instinct, and nearly with the directness of a bird. He never seemed to hesitate. Whether the path was hardly distinguishable, whether it disappeared, or whether it lay beaten and plain before him, made no sensible difference in his speed or certainty. It seemed as if fatigue could not affect him. Whenever the eyes of the wearied travelers arose from the decayed leaves over which they trod, his dark form was to be seen glancing among the stems of the trees in front, his head immovably fastened in a forward position, with the light plume on his crest fluttering in a current of air, made solely by the swiftness of his own motion.

But all this diligence and speed were not without an object. After crossing a low vale, through which a gushing brook meandered, he suddenly ascended a hill, so steep and difficult of ascent that the sisters were compelled to alight, in order to follow. When the summit was gained, they found themselves on a level spot, but thinly covered with trees, under one of which Magua had thrown his dark form, as if willing and ready to seek that rest which was so much needed by the whole party.

CHAPTER XI.

"—Cursed be my tribe
If I forgive him."

—SHYLOCK.

THE Indian had selected, for this desirable purpose, one of those steep, pyramidal hills which bear a strong resemblance to artificial mounds, and which so frequently occur in the valleys of America. The one in question was high and precipitous; its top flattened as usual, but with one of its sides more than ordinarily irregular. It possessed no other apparent advantage for a resting-place than in its elevation and form, which might render defense easy and surprise nearly impossible. As Heyward, however, no longer expected that rescue which time and distance now rendered so improbable, he re-

garded these little peculiarities with an eye devoid of interest, devoting himself entirely to the comfort and condolence of his feeble companions. The Narragansets were suffered to browse on the branches of the trees and shrubs that were thinly scattered over the summit of the hill, while the remains of their provisions were spread under the shade of a beech that stretched its horizontal limbs like a canopy above them.

Notwithstanding the swiftness of their flight, one of the Indians had found an opportunity to strike a straggling fawn with an arrow, and had borne the more preferable fragments of the victim patiently on his shoulders to the stopping-place. Without any aid from the science of cookery, he was immediately employed, in common with his fellows, in gorging himself with this digestible sustenance. Magua alone sat apart, without participating in the revolting meal, and apparently buried in the deepest thought.

This abstinence, so remarkable in an Indian when he possessed the means of satisfying hunger, at length attracted the notice of Heyward. The young man willingly believed that the Huron deliberated on the most eligible manner of eluding the vigilance of his associates. With a view to assist his plans, by any suggestion of his own, and to strengthen the temptation, he left the beech and straggled, as if without an object, to the spot where Le Renard was seated.

"Has not Magua kept the sun in his face long enough to escape all danger from the Canadians?" he asked, as though no longer doubtful of the good intelligence established between them; "and will not the chief of William Henry be better pleased to see his daughters before another night may have hardened his heart to their loss, to make him less liberal in his reward?"

"Do the pale-faces love their children less in the morning than at night?" asked the Indian coldly.

"By no means," returned Heyward, anxious to recall his error, if he had made one; "the white man may, and does often forget the burial-place of his fathers; he

sometimes ceases to remember those he should love and has promised to cherish; but the affection of a parent for his child is never permitted to die."

"And is the heart of the white-headed chief soft, and will he think of the babes that his squaws have given him? He is hard to his warriors, and his eyes are made of stone!"

"He is severe to the idle and wicked, but to the sober and deserving he is a leader, both just and humane. I have known many fond and tender parents, but never have I seen a man whose heart was softer towards his child. You have seen the gray-head in front of his warriors, Magua; but I have seen his eyes swimming in water when he spoke of those children who are now in your power."

Heyward paused, for he knew not how to construe the remarkable expression that gleamed across the swarthy features of the attentive Indian. At first it seemed as if the remembrance of the promised reward grew vivid in his mind, while he listened to the sources of parental feelings which were to assure its possession; but as Duncan proceeded, the expression of joy became so fiercely malignant that it was impossible not to apprehend it proceeded from some passion more sinister than avarice.

"Go," said the Huron, suppressing the alarming exhibition in an instant in a death-like calmness of countenance; "go to the dark-haired daughter, and say Magua waits to speak. The father will remember what the child promises."

Duncan, who interpreted this speech to express a wish for some additional pledge that the promised gifts should not be withheld, slowly and reluctantly repaired to the place where the sisters were now resting from their fatigue, to communicate its purport to Cora.

"You understand the nature of an Indian's wishes," he concluded, as he led her towards the place where she was expected, "and must be prodigal of your offers of powder and blankets. Ardent spirits are, however, the most prized by such as he; nor would it be amiss to add

some boon from your own hand, with that grace you so well know how to practice. Remember, Cora, that on your presence of mind and ingenuity even your life, as well as that of Alice, may in some measure depend."

"Heyward, and yours?"

"Mine is of little moment; it is already sold to my king, and is a prize to be seized by any enemy who may possess the power. I have no father to expect me, and but few friends to lament a fate which I have courted with the unsatiable longings of youth after distinction. But hush; we approach the Indian. Magua, the lady with whom you wish to speak, is here."

The Indian rose slowly from his seat, and stood for near a minute silent and motionless. He then signed with his hand for Heyward to retire, saying coldly—

"When the Huron talks to the woman, his tribe shut their ears."

Duncan, still lingering, as if refusing to comply, Cora said, with a calm smile—

"You hear, Heyward, and delicacy at least should urge you to retire. Go to Alice, and comfort her with our reviving prospects."

She waited until he had departed, and then turning to the native, with the dignity of sex in her voice and manner, she added, "What would Le Renard say to the daughter of Munro?"

"Listen," said the Indian, laying his hand firmly upon her arm, as if willing to draw her utmost attention to his words; a movement that Cora as firmly but quietly repulsed by extricating the limb from his grasp—"Magua was born a chief and a warrior among the red Hurons of the lakes; he saw the sun of twenty summers make the snows of twenty winters run off in the streams before he saw a pale-face; and he was happy! Then his Canada fathers came into the woods, and taught him to drink the fire-water, and he became a rascal. The Hurons drove him from the graves of his fathers, as they would chase the hunted buffalo. He ran down the shores of the lakes, and followed their outlet to the 'city of cannon.' There he hunted and fished, till the people chased

in again through the woods into the arms of his enemies. The chief, who was born Huron, was at last a warrior among the Mohawks!"

"Something like this I had heard before," said Cora, observing that he paused to suppress those passions which began to burn with too bright a flame, as he recalled the recollection of his supposed injuries.

"Was it the fault of Le Renard that his head was not made of rock? Who gave him the fire-water? who made him a villain? 'Twas the pale-faces, the people of your own color."

"And am I answerable that thoughtless and unprincipled men exist whose shades of countenance may resemble mine?" Cora calmly demanded of the excited savage.

"No; Magua is a man, and not a fool; such as you never open their lips to the burning stream; the Great Spirit has given you wisdom!"

"What then have I to do, or say, in the matter of your misfortunes, not to say of your errors?"

"Listen," repeated the Indian, resuming his earnest attitude; "when his English and French fathers dug up the hatchet, Le Renard struck the war-post of the Mohawks, and went out against his own nation. The pale-faces have driven the red-skins from their hunting grounds, and now, when they fight, a white man leads the way. The old chief at Horican, your father, was the great captain of our party. He said to the Mohawks do this, and do that, and he was minded. He made a law that if an Indian swallowed the fire-water, and came into the cloth wigwams of his warriors, it should not be forgotten. Magua foolishly opened his mouth, and the hot liquor led him into the cabin of Munro. What did the gray-head? let his daughter say."

"He forgot not his words, and did justice, by punishing the offender," said the undaunted daughter.

"Justice!" repeated the Indian, casting an oblique glance of the most ferocious expression at her unyielding countenance; "is it justice to make evil, and

then punish for it? Magua was not himself; but it was the fire-water that spoke and acted for him! but Munro did not believe it. The Huron chief was tied up before all the pale-faced warriors, and whipped like a dog."

Cora remained silent, for she knew not how to palliate this imprudent severity on the part of her father, in a manner to suit the comprehension of an Indian."

"See!" continued Magua, tearing aside the slight calico that very imperfectly concealed his painted breast; "here are scars given by knives and bullets—of these a warrior may boast before his nation; but the gray-head has left marks on the back of the Huron chief that he must hide, like a squaw, under this painted cloth of the whites."

"I had thought," resumed Cora, "that an Indian warrior was patient, and that his spirits felt not, and knew not, the ruin his body suffered."

"When the Chippewas tied Magua to the stake, and cut this gash," said the other, laying his finger on a deep scar, "the Huron laughed in their faces, and told them, Women struck so light! His spirit was then in the clouds! But when he felt the blows of Munro, his spirit lay under the birch. The spirit of a Huron is never drunk; it remembers forever!"

"But it may be appeased. If my father has done you this injustice, show him how an Indian can forgive an injury and take back his daughters. You have heard from Major Heyward—"

Magua shook his head, forbidding the repetition of offers he so much despised.

"What would you have?" continued Cora, after a most painful pause, while the conviction forced itself on her mind that the too sanguine and generous Duncan had been cruelly deceived by the cunning of the savage.

"What a Huron loves—good for good; bad for bad!"

"You would then revenge the injury inflicted by Munro on his helpless daughters. Would it not be more like a man to go before his face and take the satisfaction of a warrior?"

"The arms of the pale-faces are long

and their knives sharp!" returned the savage, with a malignant laugh; "why should Le Renard go among the muskets of his warriors when he holds the spirit of the gray-head in his hand?"

"Name your intention, Magua," said Cora, struggling with herself to speak with steady calmness. "Is it to lead us prisoners to the woods, or do you contemplate even some greater evil? Is there no reward, no means of palliating the injury and of softening your heart? At least release my gentle sister, and pour out all your malice on me. Purchase wealth by her safety and satisfy your revenge with a single victim. The loss of both his daughters might bring the aged man to his grave, and where would then be the satisfaction of Le Renard?"

"Listen," said the Indian again. "The light eyes can go back to the Huron, and tell the old chief what has been done, if the dark-haired woman will swear by the Great Spirit of her fathers to tell no lie."

"What must I promise?" demanded Cora, still maintaining a secret ascendancy over the fierce native by the collected and feminine dignity of her presence.

"When Magua left his people, his wife was given to another chief; he has now made friends with the Hurons, and will go back to the graves of his tribe, on the shores of the great lake. Let the daughter of the English chief follow, and live in his wigwam forever."

However revolting a proposal of such a character might prove to Cora, she retained, notwithstanding her powerful disgust, sufficient self-command to reply, without betraying the weakness.

"And what pleasure would Magua find in sharing his cabin with a wife he did not love; one who would be of a nation and color different from his own! It would be better to take the gold of Munro, and buy the heart of some Huron maid with his gifts."

The Indian made no reply for near a minute, but bent his fierce looks on the countenance of Cora, in such wavering glances, that her eyes sank with shame,

under an impression that, for the first time, they had encountered an expression that no chaste female might endure. While she was shrinking, within herself, in dread of having her ears wounded by some proposal still more shocking than the last, the voice of Magua answered, in its tones of deepest malignancy—

"When the blows scorched the back of the Huron, he would know where to find a woman to feel the smart. The daughter of Munro would draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison. The body of the gray-head would sleep among his cannon, but his heart would lie within the reach of the knife of Le Subtil."

"Monster! well dost thou deserve thy treacherous name!" cried Cora in an ungovernable burst of filial indignation. "None but a fiend could meditate such a vengeance! But thou overratest thy power! You shall find it is, in truth, the heart of Munro you hold, and that it will defy your utmost malice!"

The Indian answered this bold defiance by a ghastly smile that showed an unaltered purpose, while he motioned her away, as if to close the conference forever. Cora, already regretting her precipitation, was obliged to comply, for Magua instantly left the spot and approached his gluttonous comrades. Heyward flew to the side of the agitated female and demanded the result of a dialogue that he had watched at a distance with so much interest. But unwilling to alarm the fears of Alice, she evaded a direct reply, betraying only by her countenance her utter want of success, and keeping her anxious looks fastened on the slightest movements of their captors. To the reiterated and earnest questions of her sister concerning their probable destination, she made no other answer than by pointing towards the dark group with an agitation she could not control, and murmuring as she folded Alice to her bosom—

"There, there; read our fortunes in their faces; we shall see; we shall see!"

The action and the choked utterance of Cora spoke more impressively than any words, and quickly drew the attention of her companions on that spot where her

own was riveted with an intenseness that nothing but the importance of the stake could create.

When Magua reached the cluster of lolling savages, who, gorged with their disgusting meal, lay stretched on the earth in brutal indulgence, he commenced speaking with the dignity of an Indian chief. The first syllables he uttered had the effect to cause his listeners to raise themselves in attitudes of respectful attention. As the Huron used his native language, the prisoners, notwithstanding the caution of the natives had kept them within the swing of their tomahawks, could only conjecture the substance of his harangue from the nature of those significant gestures with which an Indian always illustrates his eloquence.

At first the language, as well as the action of Magua, appeared calm and deliberate. When he succeeded in sufficiently awakening the attention of his comrades, Heyward fancied, by his pointing so frequently towards the direction of the great lakes, that he spoke of the land of their fathers and of their distant tribe. Frequent indications of applause escaped the listeners, who, as they uttered the expressive "Hugh!" looked at each other in commendation of the speaker. Le Renard was too skillful to neglect his advantage. He now spoke of the long and painful route by which they had left those spacious grounds and happy villages, to come and battle against the enemies of their Canadian fathers. He enumerated the warriors of the party; their several merits; their frequent services to the nation; their wounds; and the number of the scalps they had taken. Whenever he alluded to any present (and the subtle Indian neglected none), the dark countenance of the flattered individual gleamed with exultation, nor did he even hesitate to assert the truth of the words by gestures of applause and confirmation.

Then the voice of the speaker fell, and lost the loud, animated tones of triumph with which he had enumerated their deeds of success and victory. He described the cataract of Glenn's; the impregnable position of its rocky island, with its caverns,

and its numerous rapids and whirlpools; he named the name of "La Longue Carabine," and paused until the forest beneath them had sent up the last echo of a loud and long yell, with which the hated appellation was received. He pointed toward the youthful military captive, and described the death of a favorite warrior who had been precipitated into the deep ravine by his hand. He not only mentioned the fate of him who, hanging between heaven and earth, had presented such a spectacle of horror to the whole band, but he acted anew the terrors of his situation, his resolution, and his death, on the branches of a sapling; and, finally, he rapidly recounted the manner in which each of their friends had fallen, never failing to touch upon their courage and their most acknowledged virtues. When this recital of events was ended, his voice once more changed, and became plaintive, and even musical, in its low guttural sounds. He now spoke of the wives and children of the slain; their destitution; their misery, both physical and moral; their distance; and, at last, of their unavenged wrongs. Then, suddenly lifting his voice to a pitch of terrific energy, he concluded, by demanding—

"Are the Hurons dogs to bear this? Who shall say to the wife of Menowgwa that the fishes have his scalp, and that his nation have not taken revenge! Who will dare meet the mother of Wassawattmie, that scornful woman, with his hands clean? What shall be said to the old men when they ask us for scalps, and we have not a hair from a white head to give them! The women will point their fingers at us. There is a dark spot on the names of the Hurons, and it must be hid in blood!"

His voice was no longer audible in the burst of rage which now broke into the air, as if the wood, instead of containing so small a band, was filled with the nation. During the foregoing address the progress of the speaker was too plainly read by those most interested in his success, through the medium of the countenances of the men he addressed. They had answered his melancholy and mourning by sympathy and sorrow; his assertions, by gestures of confirmation; and

his boastings with the exultation of savages. When he spoke of courage, their looks were firm and responsive; when he alluded to their injuries, their eyes kindled with fury; when he mentioned the taunts of the women, they dropped their heads in shame; but when he pointed out their means of vengeance, he struck a chord which never failed to thrill in the breast of an Indian. With the first intimation that it was within their reach, the whole band sprung upon their feet as one man; giving utterance to their rage in the most frantic cries, they rushed upon their prisoners in a body with drawn knives and uplifted tomahawks. Heyward threw himself between the sisters and the foremost, whom he grappled with a desperate strength that for a moment checked his violence. This unexpected resistance gave Magua time to interpose, and with rapid enunciation and animated gesture, he drew the attention of the band again to himself. In that language he knew so well how to assume, he diverted his comrades from that instant purpose, and invited them to prolong the misery of their victims. His proposal was received with acclamations, and executed with the swiftness of thought.

Two powerful warriors cast themselves on Heyward, while another was occupied in securing the less active singing-master. Neither of the captives, however; submitted without a desperate though fruitless struggle. Even David hurled his assailant to the earth; nor was Heyward secured until the victory over his companion enabled the Indians to direct their united force to that object. He was then bound and fastened to the body of a sapling, on whose branches Magua had acted the pantomime of the falling Huron. When the young soldier regained his recollection he had the painful certainty before his eyes that a common fate was intended for the whole party. On his right was Cora, in a durance similar to his own, pale and agitated, but with an eye whose steady look still read the proceedings of their enemies. On his left, the withes which bound her to a pine, performed that office for Alice which her

trembling limbs refused, and alone kept her fragile form from sinking. Her hands were clasped before her in prayer, but instead of looking upwards towards that power which alone could rescue them, her unconscious looks wandered to the countenance of Duncan with infantile dependency. David had contended, and the novelty of the circumstance held him silent, in deliberation on the propriety of the unusual occurrence.

The vengeance of the Hurons had now taken a new direction, and they prepared to execute it with that barbarous ingenuity with which they were familiarized by the practice of centuries. Some sought knots to raise the blazing pile; one was riving the splinters of pine, in order to pierce the flesh of their captives with the burning fragments; and others bent the tops of two saplings to the earth, in order to suspend Heyward by the arms between the recoiling branches. But the vengeance of Magua sought a deeper and a more malignant enjoyment.

While the less refined monsters of the band prepared, before the eyes of those who were to suffer, these well-known and vulgar means of torture, he approached Cora, and pointed out with the most malignant expression of countenance the speedy fate that awaited her—

“Ha!” he added, “what says the daughter of Munro? Her head is too good to find a pillow in the wigwam of Le Renard; will she like it better when it rolls about this hill a plaything for the wolves? Her bosom cannot nurse the children of a Huron; she will see it spit upon by Indians!”

“What means the monster?” demanded the astonished Heyward.

“Nothing!” was the firm reply. “He is a savage, a barbarous and ignorant savage, and knows not what he does. Let us find leisure, with our dying breath, to ask for him penitence and pardon.”

“Pardon!” echoed the fierce Huron, mistaking, in his anger, the meaning of her words; “the memory of an Indian is longer than the arm of the pale-faces; his mercy shorter than their justice! Say; shall I send the yellow hair to her father,

and will you follow Magua to the great lakes, to carry his water, and feed him with corn?"

Cora beckoned him away, with an emotion of disgust she could not control.

"Leave me," she said, with a solemnity that for a moment checked the barbarity of the Indian; "you mingle bitterness in my prayers; you stand between me and my God!"

The slight impression produced on the savage was, however, soon forgotten, and he continued pointing, with taunting irony, towards Alice.

"Look! the child weeps! She is too young to die! Send her to Munro, to comb his gray hairs, and keep life in the heart of the old man."

Cora could not resist the desire to look upon her youthful sister, in whose eyes she met an imploring glance that betrayed the longings of nature.

"What says he, dearest Cora?" asked the trembling voice of Alice. "Did he speak of sending me to our father?"

For many moments the elder sister looked upon the younger with a countenance that wavered with powerful and contending emotions. At length she spoke, though her tones had lost their rich and calm fullness in an expression of tenderness that seemed maternal.

"Alice," she said, "the Huron offers us both life—nay, more than both; he offers to restore Duncan—our invaluable Duncan, as well as you, to our friends—to our father—to our heart-stricken, childless father, if I will bow down this rebellious, stubborn pride of mine and consent——"

Her voice became choked, and clasping her hands, she looked upward, as if seeking, in her agony, intelligence from a wisdom that was infinite.

"Say on," cried Alice; "to what, dearest Cora? Oh! that the proffer were made to me! to save you, to cheer our aged father! to restore Duncan, how cheerful could I die!"

"Die!" repeated Cora, with a calmer and a firmer voice, "that were easy! Perhaps the alternative may not be less so. He would have me," she continued,

her accents sinking under a deep consciousness; go to the habitations of the Hurons; to remain there; in short, to become his wife! Speak, then, Alice; child of my affections! sister of my love! And you, too, Major Heyward, aid my weak reason with your counsel. Is life to be purchased by such a sacrifice? Will you, Alice, receive it at my hands at such a price? And *you*, Duncan; guide me; control me between you; for I am wholly yours."

"Would I!" echoed the indignant and astonished youth. "Cora! Cora! you jest with our misery! Name not the horrid alternative again; the thought itself is worse than a thousand deaths."

"That such would be *your* answer I well knew!" exclaimed Cora, her cheeks flushing and her dark eyes once more sparkling with the lingering emotions of a woman. "What says my Alice? For her will I submit without another murmur."

Although both Heyward and Cora listened with painful suspense and the deepest attention, no sounds were heard in reply. It appeared as if the delicate and sensitive form of Alice would shrink into itself as she listened to this proposal. Her arms had fallen lengthwise before her, the fingers moving in slight convulsions; her head dropped upon her bosom, and her whole person seemed suspended against the tree, looking like some beautiful emblem of the wounded delicacy of her sex, devoid of animation, and yet keenly conscious. In a few moments, however, her head began to move slowly, in a sign of deep, unconquerable disapprobation.

"No, no, no; better that we die as we have lived, together!"

"Then die!" shouted Magua, hurling his tomahawk with violence at the unresisting speaker, and gnashing his teeth with a rage that could no longer be bridled at this sudden exhibition of firmness in the one he believed the weakest of the party. The axe cleaved the air in front of Heyward, and cutting some of the flowing ringlets of Alice, quivered in the tree above her head. The sight maddened

Duncan to desperation. Collecting all his energies in one effort, he snapped the twigs which bound him, and rushed upon another savage who was preparing, with loud yells and a more deliberate aim, to repeat the blow. They encountered, grappled, and fell to the earth together. The naked body of his antagonist afforded Heyward no means of holding his adversary, who glided from his grasp, and rose again with one knee on his chest, pressing him down with the weight of a giant. Duncan already saw the knife gleaming in the air, when a whistling sound swept past him, and was rather accompanied than followed by the sharp crack of a rifle. He felt his breast relieved from the load it had endured; he saw the savage expression of his adversary's countenance change to a look of vacant wildness, when the Indian fell dead on the faded leaves by his side.

CHAPTER XII.

Clo.—I am gone, sir,
And anon, sir,
I'll be with you again.

—TWELFTH NIGHT.

THE Hurons stood aghast at this sudden visitation of death on one of their band. But, as they regarded the fatal accuracy of an aim which had dared to immolate an enemy at so much hazard to a friend, the name of "*La Longue Carabine*" burst simultaneously from every lip, and was succeeded by a wild and a sort of plaintive howl. The cry was answered by a loud shout from a little thicket, where the incautious party had piled their arms; and, at the next moment, Hawkeye, too eager to load the rifle he had regained, was seen advancing upon them, brandishing the clubbed weapon, and cutting the air with wide and powerful sweeps. Bold and rapid as was the progress of the scout, it was succeeded by that of a light and vigorous form, which, bounding past him, leaped, with incredible activity and daring, into the very center of the Hurons, where it stood, whirling a tomahawk, and flourishing a glittering knife, with fearful menaces, in front of Cora. Quicker than the

thoughts could follow these unexpected and audacious movements, an image armed in the emblematic panoply of death glided before their eyes, and assumed a threatening attitude at the other side. The savage tormenters recoiled before these warlike intruders, and uttered, as they appeared in such quick succession, the often repeated and peculiar exclamation of surprise, followed by the well-known and dreaded appellations of—

"*Le Cerf agile! Le gros Serpent!*"

But the wary and vigilant leader of the Hurons was not so easily disconcerted. Casting his keen eyes around the little plain, he comprehended the nature of the assault at a glance, and encouraging his followers by his voice as well as his example, he unsheathed his long and dangerous knife, and rushed with a loud whoop upon the expecting Chingachgook. It was the signal for a general combat. Neither party had fire-arms, and the contest was to be decided in the deadliest manner; hand to hand, with weapons of offense, and none of defense.

Uncas answered the whoop, and, leaping on an enemy, with a single, well-directed blow of the tomahawk, cleft him to the brain. Heyward tore the weapon of Magua from the sapling, and rushed eagerly towards the fray. As the combatants were now equal in number, each singled an opponent from the adverse band. The rush and blows passed with the fury of a whirlwind and the swiftness of lightning. Hawkeye soon got another enemy within reach of his arm, and with one sweep of his formidable weapon he beat down the slight and inartificial defenses of his antagonist, crushing him to the earth with the blow. Heyward ventured to hurl the tomahawk he had seized, too ardent to await the moment of closing. It struck the Indian he had selected on the forehead, and checked for an instant his onward rush. Encouraged by this slight advantage, the impetuous young man continued his onset, and sprang upon his enemy with naked hands. A single instant was sufficient to assure him of the rashness of the measure, for he immediately found himself fully engaged, with all his

activity and courage, in endeavoring to ward the desperate thrusts made with the knife of the Huron. Unable longer to foil an enemy so alert and vigilant, he threw his arms about him, and succeeded in pinning the limbs of the other to his side, with an iron grasp, but one that was far too exhausting to himself to continue long. In this extremity he heard a voice near him, shouting—

“Extarminate the varlets! no quarter to an accursed Mingo!”

At the next moment the breach of Hawkeye's rifle fell on the naked head of his adversary, whose muscles appeared to wither under the shock, as he sank from the arms of Duncan, flexible and motionless.

When Uncas had brained his first antagonist, he turned like a hungry lion to seek another. The fifth and only Huron disengaged at the first onset had paused a moment, and then seeing that all around him were employed with the deadly strife, he had sought, with hellish vengeance, to complete the baffled work of revenge. Raising a shout of triumph, he sprang towards the defenseless Cora, sending his keen axe as the dreadful precursor of his approach. The tomahawk grazed her shoulder and, cutting the withes which bound her to the tree, left the maiden at liberty to fly. She eluded the grasp of the savage and, reckless of her own safety, threw herself on the bosom of Alice, striving, with convulsed and ill-directed fingers, to tear asunder the twigs which confined the person of her sister. Any other than a monster would have relented at such an act of generous devotion to the best and purest affection; but the breast of the Huron was a stranger to sympathy. Seizing Cora by the rich tresses which fell in confusion about her form, he tore her from her frantic hold and bowed her down with brutal violence to her knees. The savage drew the flowing curls through his hand and, raising them on high with an outstretched arm, he passed the knife around the exquisitely molded head of his victim with a taunting and exulting laugh. But he purchased this moment of fierce gratification with

the loss of the fatal opportunity. It was just then the sight caught the eye of Uncas. Bounding from his footsteps, he appeared for an instant darting through the air and, descending in a ball, he fell on the chest of his enemy, driving him many yards from the spot, headlong and prostrate. The violence of the exertion cast the young Mohican at his side. They arose together, fought and bled, each in his turn. But the conflict was soon decided; the tomahawk of Heyward and the rifle of Hawkeye descended on the skull of the Huron at the same moment that the knife of Uncas reached his heart.

The battle was now entirely terminated, with the exception of the protracted struggle between “*Le Renard Subtil*” and “*Le gros Serpent*.” Well did these barbarous warriors prove that they deserved those significant names which had been bestowed for deeds in former wars. When they engaged, some little time was lost in eluding the quick and vigorous thrusts which had been aimed at their lives. Suddenly darting on each other, they closed and came to the earth, twisted together like twining serpents, in pliant and subtle folds. At the moment when the victors found themselves unoccupied, the spot where these experienced and desperate combatants lay could only be distinguished by a cloud of dust and leaves which moved from the center of the little plain towards its boundary, as if raised by the passage of a whirlwind. Urged by the different motives of filial affection, friendship and gratitude, Heyward and his companions rushed with one accord to the place, encircling the little canopy of dust which hung above the warriors. In vain, did Uncas dart around the cloud, with a wish to strike his knife into the heart of his father's foe; the threatening rifle of Hawkeye was raised and suspended in vain, while Duncan endeavored to seize the limbs of the Huron with hands that appeared to have lost their power. Covered as they were with dust and blood, the swift evolutions of the combatants seemed to incorporate their bodies into one.

The death-like looking figure of the Mohican, and the dark form of the

Huron, gleamed before their eyes in such quick and confused succession that the friends of the former knew not where nor when to plant the succoring blow. It is true, there were short and fleeting moments when the fiery eyes of Magua were seen glittering, like the fabled organs of the basilisk, through the dusty wreath by which he was enveloped, and he read by those short and deadly glances the fate of the combat in the presence of his enemies; ere, however, any hostile hand could descend on his devoted head, its place was filled by the scowling visage of Chingachgook. In this manner the scene of the combat was removed from the center of the little plain to its verge. The Mohican now found an opportunity to make a powerful thrust with his knife; Magua suddenly relinquished his grasp, and fell backward without motion, and seemingly without life. His adversary leaped to his feet, making the arches of the forest ring with the sounds of triumph.

"Well done for the Delawares! victory to the Mohican!" cried Hawkeye, once more elevating the butt of the long and fatal rifle; "a finishing blow from a man without a cross will never tell against his honor, nor rob him of his right to the scalp."

But at the very moment when the dangerous weapon was in the act of descending, the subtle Huron rolled swiftly from beneath the danger, over the edge of the precipice, and falling on his feet, was seen leaping, with a single bound, into the center of a thicket of low bushes which clung along its sides. The Delawares, who had believed their enemy dead, uttered their exclamation of surprise, and were following with speed and clamor, like hounds in open view of the deer, when a shrill and peculiar cry from the scout instantly changed their purpose, and recalled them to the summit of the hill.

"'Twas like himself," cried the inveterate forester, whose prejudices contributed so largely to veil his natural sense of justice in all matters which concerned the Mingoes; "a lying and deceitful varlet as

he is. An honest Delaware now, being fairly vanquished, would have lain still, and been knocked on the head, but these knavish Maquas cling to life like so many cats-o'-the-mountain. Let him go—let him go; 'tis but one man, and he without rifle or bow, many a long mile from his French comrades; and, like a rattler that has lost his fangs, he can do no further mischief, until such time as he, and we too, may leave the prints of our moc-casins over a long reach of sandy plain. See, Uncas," he added, in Delaware, "your father is flaying the scalps already. It may be well to go round and feel the vagabonds that are left, or we may have another of them loping through the woods and screeching like a jay that has been winged."

So saying, the honest but implacable scout made the circuit of the dead, into whose senseless bosoms he thrust his long knife, with as much coolness as though they had been so many brutal carcasses. He had, however, been anticipated by the elder Mohican, who had already torn the emblems of victory from the unresisting heads of the slain.

But Uncas, denying his habits, we had almost said his nature, flew with instinctive delicacy, accompanied by Heyward, to the assistance of the females, and quickly releasing Alice, placed her in the arms of Cora. We shall not attempt to describe the gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of events which glowed in the bosoms of the sisters, who were thus unexpectedly restored to life and to each other. Their thanksgivings were deep and silent; the offerings of the gentle spirits, burning brightest and purest on the secret altars of their hearts; and their renovated and more earthly feeling exhibiting themselves in long and fervent though speechless caresses. As Alice rose from her knees, where she had sunk by the side of Cora, she threw herself on the bosom of the latter, and sobbed aloud the name of their aged father, while her soft, dove-like eyes sparkled with the rays of hope.

"We are saved! we are saved!" she murmured; "to return to the arms of our dear, dear father, and his heart will not

be broken with grief. And you too, Cora, my sister; my more than sister, my mother; you too are spared. And Duncan," she added, looking around upon the youth with a smile of ineffable innocence, "even our own brave and noble Duncan has escaped without a hurt."

To these ardent and nearly incoherent words Cora made no other answer than by straining the youthful speaker to her heart, as she bent over her in melting tenderness. The manhood of Heyward felt no shame in dropping tears over this spectacle of affectionate rapture, and Uncas stood, fresh and blood-stained from the combat, a calm and apparently an unmoved looker-on, it is true, but with eyes that had already lost their fierceness and were beaming with a sympathy that elevated him far above the intelligence and advanced him probably centuries before the practices of his nation.

During this display of emotion so natural in their situation, Hawkeye, whose vigilant distrust had satisfied itself that the Hurons, who disfigured the heavenly scene, no longer possessed the power to interrupt its harmony, approached David and liberated him from the bonds he had until that moment endured with the most exemplary patience.

"There," exclaimed the scout, casting the last withe behind him, "you are once more master of your own limbs, though you seem not to use them with much greater judgment than that in which they were first fashioned. If advice from one who is not older than yourself, but who, having lived most of his time in the wilderness, may be said to have experience beyond his years, will give no offense, you are welcome to my thoughts; and those are, to part with the little tooting instrument in your jacket to the first fool you meet with, and buy some useful weapon with the money, if it be only the barrel of a horseman's pistol. By industry and care you might thus come to some preferment; for by this time I should think your eyes would plainly tell you that a carrion crow is a better bird than a mocking thrasher. The one will, at least, remove foul sights from before the face of man, while the

other is only good to brew disturbances in the woods by cheating the ears of all that hear them."

"Arms and the clarion for the battle, but the song of thanksgiving to the victory!" answered the liberated David. "Friend," he added, thrusting forth his lean, delicate hand towards Hawkeye, in kindness, while his eyes twinkled and grew moist, "I thank thee that the hairs of my head still grow where they were first rooted by Providence; for, though those of other men may be more glossy and curling, I have ever found mine own suited to the brain they shelter. That I did not join myself to the battle, was less owing to disinclination, than to the bonds of the heathen. Valiant and skillful hast thou proved thyself in the conflict, and I hereby thank thee, before proceeding to discharge other and more important duties, because thou hast proved thyself well worthy of a Christian's praise."

"The thing is but a trifle, and what you may often see, if you tarry long among us," returned the scout, a good deal softened toward the man of song by this unequivocal expression of gratitude. "I have got back my old companion, 'kill-deer,'" he added, striking his hand on the breech of his rifle; "and that in itself is a victory. These Iroquois are cunning, but they outwitted themselves when they placed their firearms out of reach; and had Uncas or his father been gifted with their common Indian patience, we should have come in upon the knaves with three bullets instead of one, and that would have made a finish of the whole pack; yon loping varlet, as well as his comrades. But 'twas all fore-ordered, and for the best."

"Thou sayest well," returned David, "and hast caught the true spirit of Christianity. He that is to be saved will be saved, and he that is predestined to be damned will be damned. This is the doctrine of truth, and most consoling and refreshing it is to the true believer."

The scout, who by this time was seated, examining into the state of his rifle with a species of parental assiduity, now looked up at the other in a displeasure that he

did not affect to conceal, roughly interrupting further speech.

"Doctrine or no doctrine," said the sturdy woodsman, "'tis the belief of knaves and the curse of an honest man. I can credit that yonder Huron was to fall by my hand, for with my own eyes I have seen it; but nothing short of being a witness will cause me to think he has met with any reward, or that Chingachgook, there, will be condemned at the final day."

"You have no warranty for such an audacious doctrine, nor any covenant to support it," cried David, who was deeply tinctured with the subtle distinctions which in his time, and more especially in his province, had been drawn around the beautiful simplicity of revelation, by endeavoring to penetrate the awful mystery of the divine nature, supplying faith by self-sufficiency, and by consequence, involving those who reasoned from such human dogmas in absurdities and doubt; "your temple is reared on the sands, and the first tempest will wash away its foundation. I demand your authorities for such an uncharitable assertion." Like other advocates of a system, David was not always accurate in his use of terms. "Name chapter and verse; in which of the holy books do you find language to support you?"

"Book!" repeated Hawkeye, with singular and ill-concealed disdain; "do you take me for a whimpering boy at the apron string of one of your old gals; and this good rifle on my knee for the feather of a goose's wing, my ox's horn for a bottle of ink, and my leathern pouch for a cross-barred handkerchief to carry my dinner? Book! what have such as I, who am a warrior of the wilderness, though a man without a cross, to do with books? I never read but one, and the words that are written there are too simple and too plain to need much schooling; though I may boast that of forty long and hard-working years."

"What call you the volume?" said David, misconceiving the other's meaning.

"'Tis open before your eyes," returned the scout; "and he who owns it is not a

niggard of its use. I have heard it said that there are men who read in books to convince themselves there is a God. I know not but man may so deform his works in the settlements as to leave that which is so clear in the wilderness a matter of doubt among traders and priests. If any such there be, and he will follow me from sun to sun, through the windings of the forest, he shall see enough to teach him that he is a fool, and that the greatest of his folly lies in striving to rise to the level of one he can never equal, be it in goodness, or be it in power."

The instant David discovered that he battled with a disputant who imbibed his faith from the lights of nature, eschewing all subtleties of doctrine, he willingly abandoned a controversy from which he believed neither profit nor credit was to be derived. While the scout was speaking he had also seated himself, and producing the ready little volume and the iron-rimmed spectacles, he prepared to discharge a duty which nothing but the unexpected assault he had received in his orthodoxy could have so long suspended. He was, in truth, a minstrel of the western continent—of a much later day, certainly, than those gifted bards who formerly sang the profane renown of baron and prince, but after the spirit of his own age and country; and he was now prepared to exercise the cunning of his craft in celebration of, or rather in thanksgiving for, the recent victory. He waited patiently for Hawkeye to cease, then lifting his eyes, together with his voice, he said, aloud—

"I invite you, friends, to join in praise for this signal deliverance from the hands of barbarians and infidels, to the comfortable and solemn tones of the tune called 'Northampton.'"

He next named the page and verse where the rhymes selected were to be found, and applied the pitch-pipe to his lips, with the decent gravity that he had been wont to use in the temple. This time he was, however, without any accompaniment, for the sisters were just then pouring out those tender effusions of affection which have been already alluded to. Noth-

ing deterred by the smallness of his audiences, which, in truth, consisted only of the discontented scout, he raised his voice, commencing and ending the sacred song without accident or interruption of any kind.

Hawkeye listened, while he coolly adjusted his flint and reloaded his rifle; but the sounds wanting the extraneous assistance of scene and sympathy, failed to awaken his slumbering emotions. Never minstrel, or by whatever more suitable name David should be known, drew upon his talents in the presence of more insensible auditors; though, considering the singleness and sincerity of his motive, it is probable that no bard of profane song ever uttered notes that ascended so near to that throne where all homage and praise is due. The scout shook his head, and muttering some unintelligible words, among which "Throat" and "Iroquois," were alone audible, he walked away to collect and to examine into the state of the captured arsenal of the Hurons. In this office he was now joined by Chingachgook, who found his own, as well as the rifle of his son, among the arms. Even Heyward and David were furnished with weapons; nor was ammunition wanting to render them all effectual.

When the foresters had made their selection, and distributed their prizes, the scout announced that the hour had arrived when it was necessary to move. By this time the song of Gamut had ceased and the sisters had learned to still the exhibition of their emotions. Aided by Duncan and the younger Mohican, the two latter descended the precipitous sides of that hill which they had so lately ascended under so very different auspices, and whose summit had so nearly proved the scene of their massacre. At the foot, they found the Narragansets browsing the herbage of the bushes; and having mounted they followed the movements of the guide, who, in the most deadly straits, had so often proved himself their friend. The journey was, however, short. Hawkeye, leaving the blind path that the Hurons had followed, turned short to his right, and entering the thicket, he

crossed a babbling brook, and halted in a narrow dell, under the shade of a few water elms. Their distance from the base of the fatal hill was but a few rods, and the steeds had been serviceable only in crossing the shallow stream.

The scout and the Indians appeared to be familiar with the sequestered place where they now were; for, leaning their rifles against the trees, they commenced throwing aside the dried leaves, and opening the blue clay, out of which a clear and sparkling spring of bright, glancing water, quickly bubbled. The white man then looked about him, as though seeking for some object, which was not to be found as readily as he expected.

"Them careless imps, the Mohawks, with their Tuscarora and Onondaga brethren, have been here slaking their thirst," he muttered, "and the vagabonds have thrown away the gourd! This is the way with benefits, when they are bestowed on such disremembering hounds! Here has the Lord laid his hand, in the midst of the howling wilderness, for their good, and raised a fountain of water from the bowels of the 'arth that might laugh at the richest shop of apothecary's ware in all the colonies, and see! the knaves have trodden in the clay, and deformed the cleanliness of the place, as though they were brute beasts, instead of human men."

Uncas silently extended towards him the desired gourd, which the spleen of Hawkeye had hitherto prevented him from observing on a branch of an elm. Filling it with water, he retired a short distance, to a place where the ground was more firm and dry; here he coolly seated himself, and after taking a long and apparently a grateful draught, he commenced a very strict examination of the fragments of food left by the Hurons, which had hung in a wallet on his arm.

"Thank you, lad," he continued, returning the empty gourd to Uncas; "now we will see how these rampaging Hurons lived, when outlying in ambushments. Look at this! The varlets know the better pieces of the deer; and one would think they might carve and roast a saddle equal to the best cook in the land. But everything

is raw, for the Iroquois are thorough savages. Uncas, take my steel and kindle a fire; a mouthful of a tender broil will give nature a helping hand, after so long a trail."

Heyward, perceiving that their guides now set about their repast in sober earnest, assisted the ladies to alight, and placed himself at their side, not unwilling to enjoy a few moments of grateful rest, after the bloody scene he had just gone through. While the culinary process was in hand, curiosity induced him to inquire into the circumstances which had led to their timely and unexpected rescue—

"How is it that we see you so soon, my generous friend," he asked, "and without aid from the garrison of Edward?"

"Had we gone to the bend in the river, we might have been in time to rake the leaves over your bodies, but too late to have saved your scalps," coolly answered the scout. "No, no; instead of throwing away strength and opportunity by crossing to the fort, we lay by, under the bank of the Hudson, waiting to watch the movements of the Hurons."

"You were, then, witnesses of all that passed?"

"Not of all; for Indian sight is too keen to be easily cheated, and we kept close. A difficult matter it was, too, to keep this Mohican boy snug in the ambushment. Ah! Uncas, Uncas, your behavior was more like that of a curious woman than of a warrior on his scent."

Uncas permitted his eyes to turn for an instant on the sturdy countenance of the speaker, but he neither spoke nor gave any indication of repentance. On the contrary, Heyward thought the manner of the young Mohican was disdainful, if not a little fierce, and that he suppressed passions that were ready to explode, as much in compliment to the listeners as from the deference he usually paid to his white associate.

"You saw our capture?" Heyward next demanded.

"We heard it," was the significant answer. "An Indian yell is plain language to men who have passed their days in the woods. But when you landed, we were

driven to crawl, like serpents, beneath the leaves; and then we lost sight of you entirely, until we placed eyes on you again, trussed to the trees, and ready bound for an Indian massacre."

"Our rescue was the deed of Providence. It was nearly a miracle that you did not mistake the path, for the Hurons divided, and each band had its horses."

"Ay! there we were thrown off the scent, and might, indeed, have lost the trail, had it not been for Uncas; we took the path, however, that led into the wilderness; for we judged, and judged rightly, that the savages would hold that course with their prisoners. But when we had followed it for many miles, without finding a single twig broken, as I had advised, my mind misgave me; especially as all the footsteps had the prints of moccasins."

"Our captors had the precaution to see us shod like themselves," said Duncan, raising a foot, and exhibiting the buckskin he wore.

"Ay! 'twas judgmatical, and like themselves; though we were too expert to be thrown from a trail by so common an invention."

"To what, then, are we indebted for our safety?"

"To what, as a white man who has no taint of Indian blood, I should be ashamed to own; to the judgment of the young Mohican, in matters which I should know better than he, but which I can now hardly believe to be true, though my own eyes tell me it is so."

"'Tis extraordinary! will you not name the reason?"

"Uncas was bold enough to say that the beasts ridden by the gentle ones," continued Hawkeye, glancing his eyes, not without curious interest, on the fillies of the ladies, "planted the legs of one side on the ground at the same time, which is contrary to the movements of all trotting four-footed animals of my knowledge, except the bear. And yet here are horses that always journey in this manner, as my own eyes have seen, and as their trail has shown for twenty long miles."

"'Tis the merit of the animal! They come from the shores of Narragansett Bay, in the small province of Providence plantations, and are celebrated for their hardihood, and the ease of this peculiar movement; though other horses are not unfrequently trained to the same."

"It may be—it may be," said Hawkeye, who had listened with singular attention to this explanation; "though I am a man who has the full blood of the whites, my judgment in deer and beaver is greater than in beasts of burden. Major Effingham has many noble chargers, but I have never seen one travel after such a sideling gait."

"True! for he would value the animals for very different properties. Still is this a breed highly esteemed, and, as you witness, much honored with the burdens it is often destined to bear."

The Mohicans had suspended their operations about the glittering fire to listen; and when Duncan had done, they looked at each other significantly, the father uttering the never-failing exclamation of surprise. The scout ruminated like a man digesting his newly acquired knowledge, and once more stole a curious glance at the horses.

"I dare to say there are even stranger sights to be seen in the settlements," he said at length; "nature is sadly abused by man, when he once gets the mastery. But, go sidelong or go straight, Uncas had seen the movement, and their trail led us on to the broken bush. The outer branch, near the prints of one of the horses, was bent upward, as a lady breaks a flower from its stem, but all the rest were ragged and broken down, as if the strong hand of a man had been tearing them. So I concluded that the cunning varments had seen the twig bent and had torn the rest to make us believe a buck had been feeling the boughs with his antlers."

"I do believe your sagacity did not deceive you, for some such thing occurred."

"That was easy to see," added the scout in no degree conscious of having exhibited any extraordinary sagacity; "and a very different matter it was from

a waddling horse. It then struck me the Mingoës would push for this spring, for the knaves well know the virtue of its waters."

"Is it, then, so famous?" demanded Heyward, examining with a more curious eye the secluded dell, with its bubbling fountain, surrounded as it was by earth of a deep dingy brown.

"Few red-skins, who travel south and east of the great lakes, but have heard of its qualities. Will you taste for yourself?"

Heyward took the gourd, and after swallowing a little of the water, threw it aside with grimaces of discontent. The scout laughed in his silent but heartfelt manner, and shook his head with vast satisfaction.

"Ah! you want the flavor that one gets by habit; the time was when I liked it as little as yourself; but I have come to my taste, and I now crave it, as the deer does the licks.* Your high-spiced wines are not better liked than the red-skin relishes this water; especially when his nature is ailing. But Uncas has made his fire, and it is time we think of eating, for our journey is long and all before us."

Interrupting the dialogue by his abrupt transition, the scout had instant recourse to the fragments of food which had escaped the voracity of the Hurons. A very summary process completed the simple cookery, when he and the Mohicans commenced their humble meal, with the silence and characteristic diligence of men who ate in order to enable themselves to endure great and unremitting toil.

When this necessary and, happily, grateful duty had been performed, each of the foresters stooped and took a long and parting draught at that solitary and silent spring,† around which and its

*Many of the animals of the American forests resort to those spots where salt springs are found. These are called "licks," or "salt licks" in the language of the country, from the circumstance that the quadruped is often obliged to lick the earth, in order to obtain the saline particles. These licks are great places of resort with the hunters, who waylay their game near the paths that lead to them.

†The scene of the foregoing incidents is on the spot where the village of Ballston now stands; one of the two principal watering-places of America.

sister fountains, within fifty years, the wealth, beauty and talents of a hemisphere were to assemble in throngs in pursuit of health and pleasure. Then Hawkeye announced his determination to proceed. The sisters resumed their saddles; Duncan and David grasped their rifles and followed on their footsteps; the scout leading the advance and the Mohicans bringing up the rear. The whole party moved swiftly through the narrow path, towards the north, leaving the healing waters to mingle unheeded with the adjacent brook, and the bodies of the dead to fester on the neighboring mount, without the rights of sepulture; a fate but too common to the warriors of the woods to excite either commiseration or comment.

CHAPTER XIII.

I'll seek a readier path.

—PARNELL.

THE route taken by Hawkeye lay across those sandy plains, relieved by occasional valleys and swells of land, which had been traversed by their party on the same morning of the day, with the baffled Magua for their guide. The sun had now fallen low towards the distant mountains; and as their journey lay through the interminable forest, the heat was no longer oppressive. Their progress, in consequence, was proportionate; and long before the twilight gathered about them they had made a good many toilsome miles on their return.

The hunter, like the savage whose place he filled, seemed to select among the blind signs of their wild route, with a species of instinct, seldom abating his speed and never pausing to deliberate. A rapid and oblique glance at the moss on the trees, with an occasional upward gaze towards the setting sun, or a steady but passing look at the direction of the numerous watercourses through which he waded, were sufficient to determine his path and remove his greatest difficulties. In the meantime the forest began to change its hues, losing that lively green which had embellished its arches, in the graver light

which is the usual precursor of the close of day.

While the eyes of the sisters were endeavoring to catch glimpses through the trees of the flood of golden glory which formed a glittering halo around the sun, tinging here and there with ruby streaks, or bordering with narrow edgings of shining yellow a mass of clouds that lay piled at no great distance above the western hills, Hawkeye turned suddenly, and, pointing upwards towards the gorgeous heavens, he spoke.

"Yonder is the signal given to man to seek his food and natural rest," he said; "better and wiser would it be, if he could understand the signs of nature, and take a lesson from the fowls of the air and the beasts of the fields! Our night, however, will soon be over; for, with the moon, we must be up and moving again. I remember to have fou't the Maquas, hereaways, in the first war in which I ever drew blood from man; and we threw up a work of blocks to keep the ravenous varments from handling our scalps. If my marks do not fail me, we shall find the place a few rods further to our left."

Without waiting for an assent, or, indeed, for any reply, the sturdy hunter moved boldly into a dense thicket of young chestnuts, shoving aside the branches of the exuberant shoots which nearly covered the ground, like a man who expected at each step to discover some object he had formerly known. The recollection of the scout did not deceive him. After penetrating through the brush, matted as it was with briars, for a few hundred feet, he entered an open space that surrounded a low, green hillock, which was crowned by the decayed block-house in question. This rude and neglected building was one of those deserted works which, having been thrown up on an emergency, had been abandoned with the disappearance of danger, and was now quietly crumbling in the solitude of the forest, neglected and nearly forgotten, like the circumstances which had caused it to be reared.

Such memorials of the passage and struggles of man are yet frequent throughout the broad barrier of wilderness which

once separated the hostile provinces, and form a species of ruins that are intimately associated with the recollections of colonial history, and which are in appropriate keeping with the gloomy character of the surrounding scenery.* The roof of bark had long since fallen and mingled with the soil; but the huge logs of pine which had been hastily thrown together still preserved their relative positions, though one angle of the work had given way under the pressure, and threatened a speedy downfall to the remainder of the rustic edifice.

While Heyward and his companions hesitated to approach a building so decayed, Hawkeye and the Indians entered within the low walls, not only without fear, but with obvious interest. While the former surveyed the ruins, both internally and externally, with the curiosity of one whose recollections were reviving at each moment, Chingachgook related to his son, in the language of the Delawares, and with the pride of a conqueror, the brief history of the skirmish which had been fought in his youth in that secluded spot. A strain of melancholy, however, blended with his triumph, rendering his voice, as usual, soft and musical.

In the meantime the sisters gladly dismounted, and prepared to enjoy their halt in the coolness of the evening, and in a security which they believed nothing but the beasts of the forest could invade.

"Would not our resting-place have

* Some years since, the writer was shooting in the vicinity of the ruins of Fort Oswego, which stands on the shores of Lake Ontario. His game was deer, and his chase a forest that stretched, with little interruption, fifty miles inland. Unexpectedly he came upon six or eight ladders lying in the woods within a short distance of each other. They were rudely made, and much decayed. Wondering what could have assembled so many of these instruments in such a place, he sought an old man who resided near for the explanation.

During the war of 1776 Fort Oswego was held by the British. An expedition had been sent two hundred miles through the wilderness to surprise the fort. It appears that the Americans, on reaching the spot named, which was within a mile or two of the fort, first learned that they were expected, and in great danger of being cut off. They threw away their scaling ladders and made a rapid retreat. These ladders had lain unmolested thirty years, in the spot where they had thus been cast.

been more retired, my worthy friend," demanded the more vigilant Duncan, perceiving that the scout had already finished his short survey, "had we chosen a spot less known and one more rarely visited than this?"

"Few live who know the block-house was ever raised," was the slow and musing answer; "'tis not often that books are made, and narratives written, of such a scrimmage as was here fought between the Mohicans and the Mohawks, in a war of their own waging. I was then a youngster and went out with the Delawares, because I knew they were a scandalized and wronged race. Forty days and forty nights did the imps crave our blood around this pile of logs, which I designed and partly reared, being, as you'll remember, no Indian myself, but a man without a cross. The Delawares lent themselves to the work and we made it good, ten to twenty, until our numbers were nearly equal, and then we sallied out upon the hounds, and not a man of them ever got back to tell the fate of his party. Yes, yes; I was then young and new to the sight of blood; and not relishing the thought that creatures who had spirits like myself should lay on the naked ground, to be torn asunder by beasts or to bleach in the rains, I buried the dead with my own hands, under that very little hillock where you have placed yourselves; and no bad seat does it make, neither, though it be raised by the bones of mortal men."

Heyward and the sisters arose, on the instant, from the grassy sepulchre; nor could the two latter, notwithstanding the terrific scenes they had so recently passed through, entirely suppress an emotion of natural horror, when they found themselves in such familiar contact with the grave of the dead Mohawks. The gray light, the gloomy little area of dark grass, surrounded by its border of brush, beyond which the pines rose, in breathing silence, apparently, into the very clouds, and the deathlike stillness of the vast forest, were all in unison to deepen such a sensation.

"They are gone, and they are harmless," continued Hawkeye, waving his

hand, with a melancholy smile, at their manifest alarm; "they'll never shout the war-whoop nor strike a blow with the tomahawk again! And of all those who aided in placing them where they lie, Chingachgook and I only are living! The brothers and family of the Mohican formed our war party; and you see before you all that are now left of his race."

The eyes of the listeners involuntarily sought the forms of the Indians, with a compassionate interest in their desolate fortune. Their dark persons were still to be seen within the shadows of the block-house, the son listening to the relation of his father with that sort of intenseness which would be created by a narrative that redounded so much to the honor of those whose names he had long revered for their courage and savage virtues.

"I had thought the Delawares a pacific people," said Duncan, "and that they never waged war in person; trusting the defense of their lands to those very Mohawks that you slew!"

"'Tis true in part," returned the scout, "and yet, at the bottom, 'tis a wicked lie. Such a treaty was made in ages gone by, through the deviltries of the Dutchers, who wished to disarm the natives that had the best right to the country, where they had settled themselves. The Mohicans, though a part of the same nation, having to deal with the English, never entered into the silly bargain, but kept to their manhood; as in truth did the Delawares; when their eyes were opened to their folly. You see before you a chief of the great Mohican Sagamores! Once his family could chase their deer over tracks of country wider than that which belongs to the Albany Patternoon, without crossing brook or hill that was not their own; but what is left to their descendant! He may find his six feet of earth when God chooses, and keep it in peace, perhaps, if he has a friend who will take the pains to sink his head so low that the plowshares cannot reach it!"

"Enough!" said Heyward, apprehensive that the subject might lead to a discussion that would interrupt the harmony so necessary to the preservation of his fair

companions; "we have journeyed far, and few among us are blessed with forms like that of yours, which seems to know neither fatigue nor weakness.

"The sinews and bones of a man carry me through it all," said the hunter, surveying his muscular limbs with a simplicity that betrayed the honest pleasure the compliment afforded him; "there are larger and heavier men to be found in the settlements, but you might travel many days in a city before you could meet one able to walk fifty miles without stopping to take breath, or who has kept the hounds within hearing during a chase of hours. However, as flesh and blood are not always the same, it is quite reasonable to suppose that the gentle ones are willing to rest, after all they have seen and done this day. Uncas, clear out the spring, while your father and I make a cover for their tender heads of these chestnut shoots and a bed of grass and leaves."

The dialogue ceased, while the hunter and his companions busied themselves in preparations for the comfort and protection of those they guided. A spring, which many long years before had induced the natives to select the place for their temporary fortification, was soon cleared of leaves, and a fountain of crystal gushed from the bed, diffusing its waters over the verdant hillock. A corner of the building was then roofed in such a manner as to exclude the heavy dew of the climate, and piles of sweet shrubs and dried leaves were laid beneath it for the sisters to repose on.

While the diligent woodsmen were employed in this manner, Cora and Alice partook of that refreshment which duty required much more than inclination prompted them to accept. They then retired within the walls, and first offering up their thanksgivings for past mercies, and petitioning for a continuance of the Divine favor throughout the coming night, they laid their tender forms on the fragrant couch, and, in spite of recollections and forebodings, soon sank into those slumbers which nature so imperiously demanded, and which were sweetened by hopes for the morrow. Duncan had pre-

pared himself to pass the night in watchfulness near them, just without the ruin, but the scout, perceiving his intentions, pointed towards Chingachgook, as he coolly disposed his own person on the grass, and said—

“The eyes of a white man are too blind for such a watch as this! The Mohican will be our sentinel, therefore let us sleep.”

“I proved myself a sluggard on my post during the past night,” said Heyward, “and have less need of repose than you, who did more credit to the character of a soldier. Let all the party seek their rest, then, while I hold the guard.”

“If we lay among the white tents of the 60th, and in front of an enemy like the French, I could not ask for a better watchman,” returned the scout; “but in the darkness and among the signs of the wilderness your judgment would be like the folly of a child, and your vigilance thrown away. Do, then, like Uncas and myself, sleep, and sleep in safety.”

Heyward perceived, in truth, that the younger Indian had thrown his form on the side of the hillock while they were talking, like one who sought to make the most of the time allotted to rest, and that his example had been followed by David, whose voice literally “clove to his jaws” with the fever of his wound, heightened as it was by their toilsome march. Unwilling to prolong a useless discussion, the young man affected to comply, by posting his back against the logs of the block-house, in a half-recumbent posture, though resolutely determined, in his own mind, not to close an eye until he had delivered his precious charge into the arms of Munro himself. Hawkeye, believing he had prevailed, soon fell asleep, and a silence as deep as the solitude in which they had found it, pervaded the retired spot.

For many minutes Duncan succeeded in keeping his senses on the alert, and alive to every moaning sound that arose from the forest. His vision became more acute as the shades of evening settled on the place; and even after the stars were glimmering above his head, he was able to distinguish the recumbent forms of his

companions, as they lay stretched on the grass, and to note the person of Chingachgook, who sat upright and motionless at one of the trees which formed the dark barrier on every side of them. He still heard the gentle breathings of the sisters, who lay within a few feet of him, and not a leaf was ruffled by the passing air of which his ear did not detect the whispering sound. At length, however, the mournful notes of a whip-poor-will became blended with the moanings of an owl; his heavy eyes occasionally sought the bright rays of the stars, and then he fancied he saw them through the fallen lids. At instants of momentary wakefulness he mistook a bush for his associate sentinel; his head next sank upon his shoulder, which, in its turn, sought the support of the ground; and, finally, his whole person became relaxed and pliant, and the young man sank into a deep sleep, dreaming that he was a knight of ancient chivalry, holding his midnight vigils before the tent of a recaptured princess, whose favor he did not despair of gaining by such a proof of devotion and watchfulness.

How long the tired Duncan lay in this insensible state he never knew himself, but his slumbering visions had been long lost in total forgetfulness, when he was awakened by a light tap on the shoulder. Aroused by this signal, slight as it was, he sprang upon his feet with a confused recollection of the self-imposed duty he had assumed with the commencement of the night—

“Who comes?” he demanded, feeling for his sword, at the place where it was usually suspended. “Speak! friend or enemy?”

“Friend,” replied the low voice of Chingachgook; who, pointing upwards at the luminary which was shedding its mild light through the opening in the trees, directly on their bivouac, immediately added in his rude English, “moon comes, and white man’s fort far—far off; time to move when sleep shuts both eyes of the Frenchman!”

“You say true! call up your friends, and bridle the horses, while I prepare my own companions for the march!”

"We are awake, Duncan," said the soft, silvery voice of Alice within the building, "and ready to travel very fast, after so refreshing a sleep; but you have watched through the tedious night in our behalf, after having endured so much fatigue the livelong day!"

"Say, rather, I would have watched, but my treacherous eyes betrayed me; twice have I proved myself unfit for the trust I bear."

"Nay, Duncan, deny it not," interrupted the smiling Alice, issuing from the shadows of the building into the light of the moon, in all the loveliness of her freshened beauty; "I know you to be a heedless one, when self is the object of your care, and but too vigilant in favor of others. Can we not tarry here a little longer while you find the rest you need? Cheerfully, most cheerfully, will Cora and I keep the vigils while you, and all these brave men, endeavor to snatch a little sleep!"

"If shame could cure me of my drowsiness I should never close an eye again," said the uneasy youth, gazing at the ingenuous countenance of Alice, where, however, in its sweet solicitude, he read nothing to confirm his half awakened suspicion. "It is but too true that, after leading you into danger by my heedlessness, I have not even the merit of guarding your pillows as should become a soldier."

"No one but Duncan himself should accuse Duncan of such a weakness. Go, then, and sleep; believe me, neither of us, weak girls as we are, will betray our watch."

The young man was relieved from the awkwardness of making any further protestations of his own demerits by an exclamation from Chingachgook and the attitude of riveted attention assumed by his son.

"The Mohicans hear an enemy!" whispered Hawkeye, who, by this time, in common with the whole party, was awake and stirring. "They scent danger in the wind!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Heyward. "Surely we have had enough of bloodshed!"

While he spoke, however, the young

soldier seized his rifle, and advancing towards the front, prepared to atone for his venial remissness by freely exposing his life in defense of those he attended.

"'Tis some creature of the forest prowling around us in quest of food," he said, in a whisper, as soon as the low and apparently distant sounds which had startled the Mohicans reached his own ears.

"Hist!" returned the attentive scout; "'tis man; even I can now tell his tread, poor as my senses are when compared to an Indian's! That scampering Huron has fallen in with one of Montcalm's outlying parties, and they have struck upon our trail! I shouldn't like, myself, to spill more human blood in this spot," he added, looking around with anxiety in his features at the dim objects by which he was surrounded; "but what must be must! Lead the horses into the block-house, Uncas, and friends, do you follow to the same shelter. Poor and old as it is, it offers a cover, and has rung with the crack of a rifle afore to-night!"

He was instantly obeyed, the Mohicans leading the Narragansetts within the ruin, whither the whole party repaired with the most guarded silence.

The sounds of approaching footsteps were now too distinctly audible to leave any doubts as to the nature of the interruption. They were soon mingled with voices calling to each other in an Indian dialect, which the hunter in a whisper affirmed to Heyward was the language of the Hurons. When the party reached the point where the horses had entered the thicket which surrounded the block-house, they were evidently at fault, having lost those marks which, until that moment, had directed their pursuit.

It would seem by the voices that twenty men were soon collected at that one spot, mingling their different opinions and advice in noisy clamor.

"The knaves know our weakness," whispered Hawkeye, who stood by the side of Heyward, in deep shade, looking through an opening in the logs, "or they wouldn't indulge their idleness in such a squaw's march. Listen to the reptiles! each man

among them seems to have two tongues, and but a single leg."

Duncan, brave as he was in the combat, could not, in such a moment of painful suspense, make any reply to the cool and characteristic remark of the scout. He only grasped his rifle more firmly, and fastened his eyes upon the narrow opening, through which he gazed upon the moonlight view with increasing anxiety. The deeper tones of one who spoke of having authority were next heard, amid a silence that denoted the respect with which his orders, or rather advice, was received. After which, by the rustling of leaves, and cracking of dried twigs, it was apparent the savages were separating in pursuit of the lost trail. Fortunately for the pursued, the light of the moon, while it shed a flood of mild luster upon the little area around the ruin, was not sufficiently strong to penetrate the deep arches of the forest, where the objects still lay in deceptive shadow. The search proved fruitless; for so short and sudden had been the passage from the faint path the travelers had journeyed into the thicket, that every trace of their footsteps was lost in the obscurity of the woods.

It was not long, however, before the restless savages were heard beating the brush, and gradually approaching the inner edge of that dense border of young chestnuts which encircled the little area.

"They are coming," muttered Heyward, endeavoring to thrust his rifle through the chink in the logs; "let us fire on their approach."

"Keep everything in the shade," returned the scout; "the snapping of a flint, or even the smell of a single kernel of the brimstone, would bring the hungry varlets upon us in a body. Should it please God that we must give battle for the scalps, trust to the experience of men who know the ways of the savages, and who are not often backward when the war-whoop is howled."

Duncan cast his eyes behind him, and saw that the trembling sisters were cowering in the far corner of the building, while the Mohicans stood in the shadow, like two upright posts, ready, and appar-

ently willing, to strike when the blow should be needed. Curbing his impatience, he again looked out upon the area and awaited the result in silence. At that instant the thicket opened, and a tall and armed Huron advanced a few paces into the open space. As he gazed upon the silent block-house, the moon fell full upon his swarthy countenance and betrayed its surprise and curiosity. He made the exclamation which usually accompanies the former emotion in an Indian, and, calling in a low voice, soon drew a companion to his side.

These children of the woods stood together for several moments pointing at the crumbling edifice and conversing in the unintelligible language of their tribe. They then approached, though with slow and cautious steps, pausing every instant to look at the building, like startled deer, whose curiosity struggled powerfully with their awakened apprehensions for the mastery. The foot of one of them suddenly rested on the mound, and he stooped to examine its nature. At this moment Heyward observed that the scout loosened his knife in its sheath and lowered the muzzle of his rifle. Imitating these movements, the young man prepared himself for the struggle which now seemed inevitable.

The savages were so near that the least motion in one of the horses, or even a breath louder than common, would have betrayed the fugitives. But, in discovering the character of the mound, the attention of the Hurons appeared directed to a different object. They spoke together, and the sounds of their voices were low and solemn, as if influenced by a reverence that was deeply blended with awe. Then they drew warmly back, keeping their eyes riveted on the ruin, as if they expected to see the apparitions of the dead issue from its silent walls, until having reached the boundary of the area, they moved slowly into the thicket and disappeared.

Hawkeye dropped the breech of his rifle to the earth, and drawing a long, free breath, exclaimed in an audible whisper—

"Ay! they respect the dead, and it has

this time saved their own lives, and it may be the lives of better men too."

Heyward lent his attention, for a single moment, to his companion, but without replying, he again turned toward those who just then interested him more. He heard the two Hurons leave the bushes, and it was soon plain that all the pursuers were gathered about them, in deep attention to their report. After a few minutes of earnest and solemn dialogue, altogether different from the noisy clamor with which they had first collected about the spot, the sounds grew fainter and more distant, and finally were lost in the depths of the forest.

Hawkeye waited until a signal from the listening Chingachgook assured him that every sound from the retiring party was completely swallowed by the distance, when he motioned to Heyward to lead forth the horses, and to assist the sisters into their saddles. The instant this was done they issued through the broken gateway, and stealing out by a direction opposite to the one by which they had entered, they quitted the spot, the sisters casting furtive glances at the silent grave and crumbling ruin, as they left the soft light of the moon to bury themselves in the gloom of the woods.

CHAPTER XIV.

Guarâ.—Qui est la ?

Puc.—Paisans, pauvres gens de France.

—KING HENRY VI.

DURING the rapid movement from the block-house, and until the party was deeply buried in the forest, each individual was too much interested in the escape to hazard a word, even in whispers. The scout resumed his post in the advance, though his steps, after he had thrown a safe distance between himself and his enemies, were more deliberate than in their previous march, in consequence of his utter ignorance of the localities of the surrounding woods. More than once he halted to consult with his confederates, the Mohicans, pointing up-

wards at the moon and examining the barks of the trees with care. In these brief pauses, Heyward and the sisters listened, with senses rendered doubly acute by the danger, to detect any symptoms which might announce the proximity of their foes. At such moments it seemed as if a vast range of country lay buried in eternal sleep, not the least sound arising from the forest, unless it was the distant and scarcely audible rippling of the water-course. Birds, beasts and man appeared to slumber alike, if, indeed, any of the latter were to be found in that wide tract of wilderness. But the sounds of the rivulet, feeble and murmuring as they were, relieved the guides at once from no trifling embarrassment, and towards it they immediately held their way.

When the banks of the little stream were gained, Hawkeye made another halt; and, taking the moccasins from his feet, he invited Heyward and Gamut to follow his example. He then entered the water, and for nearly an hour they traveled in the bed of the brook, leaving no trail. The moon had already sunk into an immense pile of black clouds, which lay impending above the western horizon, when they issued from the low and devious water-course to rise again to the light and level of the sandy but wooded plain. Here the scout seemed to be once more at home, for he held on his way with the certainty and diligence of a man who moved in the security of his own knowledge. The path soon became more uneven, and the travelers could plainly perceive that the mountains drew nigher to them on each hand, and that they were, in truth, about entering one of their gorges. Suddenly, Hawkeye made a pause, and waiting until he was joined by the whole party, he spoke, though in tones so low and cautious, that they added to the solemnity of his words in the quiet and darkness of the place.

"It is easy to know the pathways, and to find the licks and water-courses of the wilderness," he said; "but who that saw this spot could venture to say that a mighty army was at rest among yonder silent trees and barren mountains!"

"We are then at no great distance

from William Henry?" said Heyward, advancing nigher to the scout.

"It is yet a long and weary path, and when and where to strike it is now our greatest difficulty. See," he said, pointing through the trees towards a spot where a little basin of water reflected the stars from its placid bosom, "here is the 'bloody pond;' and I am on ground that I have not only often traveled, but over which I have fought the enemy from the rising to the setting sun."

"Ha! that sheet of dull and dreary water, then, is the sepulcher of the brave men who fell in the contest. I have heard it named, but never have I stood on its banks before."

"Three battles did we make with the Dutch-Frenchman* in a day," continued Hawkeye, pursuing the train of his own thoughts rather than replying to the remark of Duncan. "He met us hard by, in our outward march to ambush his advance, and scattered us, like driven deer, through the defile to the shores of Horican. Then we rallied behind our fallen trees, and made head against him, under Sir William—who was made Sir William for that very deed; and well did we pay him for the disgrace of the morning. Hundreds of Frenchmen saw the sun that day for the last time; and even their leader, Dieskau himself, fell into our hands, so cut and torn with the lead that he has gone back to his own country, unfit for further acts in war."

"'Twas a noble repulse!" exclaimed Heyward, in the heat of his youthful ardor; "the fame of it reached us early, in our southern army."

"Ay! but it did not end there. I was sent by Major Effingham, at Sir William's own bidding, to outflank the French and carry the tidings of their disaster across the portage to the fort on the Hudson. Just hereaway, where you see the trees rise into a mountain swell, I met a party coming down to our aid, and I led them

where the enemy were taking their meal, little dreaming that they had not finished the bloody work of the day."

"And you surprised them?"

"If death can be a surprise to men who are thinking only of the cravings of their appetites. We gave them but little breathing-time, for they had borne hard upon us in the fight of the morning, and there were few in our party who had not lost friend or relative by their hands. When all was over, the dead, and some say the dying, were cast into that little pond. These eyes have seen its waters colored with blood, as natural water never yet flowed from the bowels of the 'arth."

"It was a convenient, and I trust will prove a peaceful, grave for a soldier. You have, then, seen much service on this frontier?"

"I!" said the scout, erecting his tall person with an air of military pride, "there are not many echoes among these hills that haven't rung with the crack of my rifle, nor is there the space of a square mile, atwixt Horican and the river, that 'Kill Deer' hasn't dropped a living body on, be it an enemy or be it a brute beast. As for the grave there being as quiet as you mention, it is another matter. There are them in the camp who say and think, man, to lie still, should not be buried while the breath is in the body; and certain it is that in the hurry of that evening, the doctors had but little time to say who was living and who was dead. Hist! see you nothing walking on the shore of the pond?"

"'Tis not probable that any are as houseless as ourselves in this dreary forest."

"Such as he may care but little for house or shelter, and night dew can never wet a body that passes its days in the water," returned the scout, grasping the shoulder of Heyward with such convulsive strength as, to make the young soldier painfully sensible how much superstitious terror had got the mastery of a man usually so dauntless.

"By heaven! there is a human form, and it approaches. Stand to your arms,

* Baron Dieskau, a German, in the service of France. A few years previously to the period of the tale, this officer was defeated by Sir William Johnson, of Johnstown, N. Y., on the shores of Lake George.

my friends ; for we know not whom we encounter."

"*Qui vive ?*" demanded a stern, quick voice, which sounded like a challenge from another world, issuing out of that solitary and solemn place.

"What says it?" answered the scout; "it speaks neither Indian or English."

"*Qui vive ?*" repeated the same voice, which was quickly followed by the rattling of arms and a menacing attitude.

"France!" cried Heyward, advancing from the shadow of the trees to the shore of the pond, within a few yards of the sentinel.

"*D'où venez-vous—où allez-vous, d'aussi bonne heure ?*" demanded the grenadier, in the language and with the accent of a man from old France.

"*Je viens de la découverte et je vais me coucher.*"

"*Etes-vous officier du roi ?*"

"Sans doute, mon camarade; me prends-tu pour un provincial. Je suis capitaine de chasseurs (Heyward well knew that the other was of a regiment in the line) j'ai ici, avec moi, les filles du commandant de la fortification. Aha! tu en as entendu parler! je les ai fait prisonnières près de l'autre fort, et je les conduis au général."

"Ma foi! mesdames; j'en suis fâché pour vous," exclaimed the young soldier, touching his cap with grace; "mais—fortune de guerre! vous trouverez notre général un brave homme et bien poli avec les dames."

"C'est le caractère des gens de guerre," said Cora, with admirable self-possession. "Adieu, mon ami; je vous souhaiterais un devoir plus agréable à remplir."

The soldier made a low and humble acknowledgement for her civility; and Heyward adding a "bonne nuit, mon camarade," they moved deliberately forward, leaving the sentinel pacing the banks of the silent pond, little suspecting an enemy of so much effrontery, and humming to himself those words which were recalled to his mind by the sight of women, and perhaps by recollections of his own distant and beautiful France—

"Vive le vin, vive l'amour," etc., etc.

"'Tis well you understood the knave," whispered the scout, when they had gained a little distance from the place, and letting his rifle fall into the hollow of his arm again; "I soon saw that he was one of them uneasy Frenchers; and well for him it was that his speech was friendly and his wishes kind, or a place might have been found for his bones amongst those of his countrymen."

He was interrupted by a long and heavy groan which arose from the little basin, as though, in truth, the spirits of the departed lingered about their watery sepulchre.

"Surely, it was of flesh," continued the scout; "no spirit could handle its arms so steadily."

"*It was of flesh*; but whether the poor fellow still belongs to this world may well be doubted," said Heyward, glancing his eyes around him, and missing Chingachgook from their little band. Another groan, more faint than the former, was succeeded by a heavy and sullen plunge into the water, and all was as still again as if the borders of the dreary pool had never been awakened from the silence of creation. While they yet hesitated in uncertainty the form of the Indian was seen gliding out of the thicket. As the chief rejoined them, with one hand he attached the reeking scalp of the unfortunate young Frenchman to his girdle, and with the other he replaced the knife and tomahawk that had drunk his blood. He then took his wonted station with the air of a man who believed he had done a deed of merit.

The scout dropped one end of his rifle to the earth, and leaning his hands on the other, he stood musing in profound silence. Then, shaking his head in a mournful manner, he muttered—

"'Twould have been a cruel and an inhuman act for a white-skin; but 'tis the gift and natur' of an Indian, and I suppose it should not be denied. I could wish, though, it had befallen an accursed Mingo, rather than that gay young boy from the old countries."

"Enough," said Heyward, apprehensive the unconscious sisters might comprehend the nature of the detention, and

conquering his disgust by a train of reflections very much like that of the hunter; "'tis done; and though better it were left undone, cannot be amended. You see we are too obviously within the sentinels of the enemy; what course do you propose to follow?"

"Yes," said Hawkeye, rousing himself again, "'tis as you say, too late to harbor further thoughts about it. Ay, the French have gathered around the fort in good earnest, and we have a delicate needle to thread in passing them."

"And but little time to do it in," added Heyward, glancing his eyes upwards, towards the bank of vapor that concealed the setting moon.

"And little time to do it in," repeated the scout. "The thing may done in two fashions by the help of Providence, without which it may not be done at all."

"Name them quickly, for time presses."

"One would be to dismount the gentle ones, and let their beasts range the plain; by sending the Mohicans in front, we might then cut a lane through their sentries, and enter the fort over the dead bodies."

"It will not do—it will not do!" interrupted the generous Heyward; "a soldier might force his way in this manner, but never with such a convoy."

"'Twould be, indeed, a bloody path for such tender feet to wade in," returned the equally reluctant scout; "but I thought it befitting my manhood to name it. We must then turn on our trail, and get without the line of their look-outs; when we will bend short to the west, and enter the mountains; where I can hide you so that all the devil's hounds in Montcalm's pay would be thrown off the scent for months to come."

"Let it be done and that instantly."

Further words were unnecessary; for Hawkeye, merely uttering the mandate to "follow," moved along the route by which they had just entered their present critical and even dangerous situation. Their progress, like their late dialogue, was guarded and without noise; for none knew at what moment a passing patrol or a crouching picket of the enemy might

rise upon their path. As they held their silent way along the margin of the pond, again Heyward and the scout stole furtive glances at its appalling dreariness. They looked in vain for the form they had so recently seen stalking along its silent shores, while a low and regular wash of the little waves, by announcing that the waters were not yet subsided, furnished a frightful memorial of the deed of blood they had just witnessed. Like all that passing and gloomy scene, the low basin, however, quickly melted in the darkness, and became blended with the mass of black objects in the rear of the travelers.

Hawkeye soon deviated from the line of their retreat, and striking off towards the mountains which form the western boundary of the narrow plain, he led his followers, with swift steps, deep within the shadows that were cast from their high and broken summits. The route was now painful; lying over ground ragged with rocks, and intersected with ravines, and their progress proportionately slow. Bleak and black hills lay on every side of them, compensating in some degree for the additional toil of the march by the sense of security they imparted. At length the party began slowly to rise a steep and rugged ascent, by a path that curiously wound among rocks and trees, avoiding the one, and supported by the other, in a manner that showed it had been devised by men long practiced in the arts of the wilderness. As they gradually rose from the level of the valleys, the thick darkness which usually precedes the approach of day began to disperse, and objects were seen in the plain and palpable colors with which they had been gifted by nature. When they issued from the stunted woods which clung to the barren sides of the mountain, upon a flat and mossy rock that formed its summit, they met the morning as it came blushing above the green pines of a hill that lay on the opposite side of the valley of the Mohican.

The scout now told the sisters to dismount; and taking the bridles from the mouths, and the saddles off the backs of the jaded beasts, he turned them loose, to

glean a scanty subsistence among the shrubs and meager herbage of that elevated region.

"Go," he said, "and seek your food where natur' gives it you, and beware that you become not food to ravenous wolves yourselves among these hills."

"Have we no further need of them?" demanded Heyward.

"See and judge with your own eyes," said the scout, advancing towards the eastern brow of the mountain, whither he beckoned for the whole party to follow; "if it was as easy to look into the heart of man as it is to spy out the nakedness of Montcalm's camp from this spot, hypocrites would grow scarce, and the cunning of a Mingo might prove a losing game, compared to the honesty of a Delaware."

When the travelers reached the verge of the precipice, they saw at a glance the truth of the scout's declaration, and the admirable foresight with which he had led them to their commanding station.

The mountain on which they stood, elevated perhaps a thousand feet in the air, was a high cone that rose a little in advance of that range which stretches for miles along the western shores of the lake, until meeting its sister piles beyond the water, it ran off towards the Canadas in confused and broken masses of rocks, thinly sprinkled with evergreen.

Immediately at the feet of the party the southern shore of the Horican swept in a broad semi-circle from mountain to mountain, marking a wide strand that soon rose into an uneven and somewhat elevated plain. To the north stretched the limpid, and as it appeared from that dizzy height, the narrow sheet of the "holy lake," indented with numberless bays, embellished by fantastic headlands, and dotted with countless islands. At the distance of a few leagues, the bed of the waters became lost among mountains, or was rapped in the masses of vapor that came slowly rolling along their bosom, before a light morning air. But a narrow opening between the crests of the hills pointed out the passage by which they found their way still further north, to spread their pure and ample sheets

again, before pouring out their tribute to the distant Champlain. To the south stretched the defile, or rather broken plain, so often mentioned. For several miles in this direction the mountains appeared reluctant to yield their dominion, but within reach of the eye they diverged, and finally melted into the level and sandy lands, across which we have accompanied our adventurers in their double journey. Along both ranges of hills which bounded the opposite sides of the lake and valley, clouds of light vapor were arising in spiral wreaths from the uninhabited woods, looking looking like the smokes of hidden cottages; or rolled lazily down the declivities to mingle with the fogs of the lower land. A single, solitary, snow-white cloud floated above the valley, and marked the spot beneath which lay the silent pool of the "bloody pond."

Directly on the shore of the lake, and nearer to its western than to its eastern margin, lay the extensive earthen ramparts and low buildings of William Henry. Two of the sweeping bastions appeared to rest on the water which washed their bases, while a deep ditch and extensive morasses guarded its other sides and angles. The land had been cleared of wood for a reasonable distance around the work, but every other part of the scene lay in the green livery of Nature, except where the limpid water mellowed the view, or the bold rocks thrust their black and naked heads above the undulating outline of the mountain ranges. In its front might be seen the scattered sentinels, who held a weary watch against their numerous foes; and within the walls themselves, the travelers looked down upon men still drowsy with a night of vigilance. Towards the southeast, but in immediate contact with the fort, was an entrenched camp, posted on a rocky eminence that would have been far more eligible for the work itself, in which Hawkeye pointed out the presence of those auxiliary regiments that had so recently left the Hudson in their company. From the woods, a little further to the south, rose numerous dark and lurid smokes that were easily to be distinguished from the purer ex

halations of the springs, and which the scout also showed to Heyward as evidence that the enemy lay in force in that direction.

But the spectacle which most concerned the young soldier was on the western bank of the lake, though quite near to its southern termination. On a strip of land which appeared, from his stand, too narrow to contain such an army, but which, in truth, extended many hundreds of yards from the shores of the Horican to the base of the mountain, were to be seen the white tents and military engines of an encampment of ten thousand men. Batteries were already thrown up in their front, and even while the spectators above them were looking down, with such different emotions, on a scene which lay like a map beneath their feet, the roar of artillery rose from the valley and passed off in thundering echoes along the eastern hills.

"Morning is just touching them below," said the deliberate and musing scout, "and the watchers have a mind to wake up the sleepers by the sound of cannon. We are a few hours too late! Montcalm has already filled the woods with his accursed Iroquois."

"The place is, indeed, invested," returned Duncan, "but is there no expedient by which we may enter? Capture in the works would be far preferable to falling again into the hands of roving Indians."

"See!" exclaimed the scout, unconsciously directing the attention of Cora to the quarters of her own father, "how that shot has made the stones fly from the side of the commandant's house! Ay! these Frenchers will pull it to pieces faster than it was put together, solid and thick though it be."

"Heyward, I sicken at the sight of danger that I cannot share," said the undaunted but anxious daughter. "Let us go to Montcalm, and demand admission; he dare not deny a child the boon."

"You would scarce find the tent of the Frenchman with the hair on your head," said the blunt scout. "If I had but one of the thousand boats which lie empty along that shore, it might be done. Ha!

here will soon be an end of the firing, for yonder comes a fog that will turn day into night, and make an Indian arrow more dangerous than a molded cannon. Now, if you are equal to the work, and will follow, I will make a push; for I long to get down into that camp, if it be only to scatter some Mingo dogs that I see lurking in the skirts of yonder thicket of birch."

"We are equal," said Cora firmly; "on such an errand we will follow to any danger."

The scout turned to her with a smile of honest and cordial approbation, as he answered—

"I would I had a thousand men, of brawny limbs and quick eyes, that feared death as little as you! I'd send them jabbering Frenchers back into their den again, afore the week was ended, howling like so many fettered hounds or hungry wolves. But stir," he added, turning from her to the rest of the party, "the fog comes rolling down so fast, we shall have but just the time to meet it on the plain, and use it as a cover. Remember, if any accident should befall me, to keep the air blowing on your left cheeks—or, rather, follow the Mohicans; they'd scent their way, be it in day or be it at night."

He then waved his hand for them to follow, and threw himself down the steep declivity with free but careful footsteps. Heyward assisted the sisters to descend, and in a few minutes they were all far down a mountain whose sides they had climbed with so much toil and pain.

The direction taken by Hawkeye soon brought the travelers to the level of the plain, nearly opposite to a sally-port in the western curtain of the fort, which lay, itself, at the distance of about half a mile from the point where he halted to allow Duncan to come up with his charge. In their eagerness, and favored by the nature of the ground, they had anticipated the fog, which was rolling heavily down to the lake, and it became necessary to pause until the mists had wrapped the camp of the enemy in their fleecy mantle. The Mohicans profited by the delay to steal out of the woods and to make a sur-

vey of surrounding objects. They were followed at a distance by the scout, with a view to profit early by their report, and to obtain some faint knowledge for himself of the more immediate localities.

In a very few moments he returned, his face reddened with vexation, while he muttered his disappointment in words of no very gentle import.

"Here has the cunning Frenchman been posting a picket directly in our path," he said; "red-skins and whites; and we shall be as likely to fall into their midst as to pass them in the fog!"

"Cannot we make a circuit to avoid the danger," asked Heyward, "and come into our path again when it is passed?"

"Who that once bends from the line of his march in a fog can tell when or how to turn to find it again! The mists of Horican are not like the curls from a peace-pipe, or the smoke which settles above a mosquito fire."

He was yet speaking, when a crashing sound was heard, and a cannon ball entered the thicket, striking the body of a sapling, and rebounding to the earth, its force being much expended by previous resistance. The Indians followed instantly like busy attendants on the terrible messenger, and Uncas commenced speaking earnestly, and with much action, in the Delaware tongue.

"It may be so, lad," muttered the scout, when he had ended; "for desperate fevers are not to be treated like a tooth-ache. Come, then, the fog is shutting in."

"Stop!" cried Heyward; "first explain your expectations."

"Tis soon done, and a small hope it is; but it is better than nothing. This shot that you see," added the scout, kicking the harmless iron with his foot, "has plowed the 'arth in its road from the fort, and we shall hunt for the furrow it has made when all other signs may fail. No more words, but follow, or the fog may leave us in the middle of our path, a mark for both armies to shoot at."

Heyward perceiving that in fact a crisis had arrived when acts were more required than words, placed himself between the sisters and drew them swiftly forward,

keeping the dim figure of their leader in his eye. It was soon apparent that Hawkeye had not magnified the power of the fog, for, before they had proceeded twenty yards, it was difficult for the different individuals of the party to distinguish each other in the vapor.

They had made their little circuit to the left, and were already inclining again towards the right, having, as Heyward thought, got over nearly half the distance to the friendly works, when his ears were saluted with the fierce summons, apparently within twenty feet of them, of—

"*Qui va là?*"

"Push on!" whispered the scout, once more bending to the left.

"Push on!" repeated Heyward, when the summons was renewed by a dozen voices, each of which seemed charged with menace.

"*C'est moi,*" cried Duncan, dragging rather than leading those he supported swiftly onward.

"*Bôte!—qui?—moi!*"

"*Ami de la France.*"

"*Tu m'as plus l'air d'un ennemi de la France; arrête! ou pardieu je te ferai ami du diable. Non! feu, camarades, feu!*"

The order was instantly obeyed, and the fog was stirred by the explosion of fifty muskets. Happily, the aim was bad, and the bullets cut the air in a direction a little different from that taken by the fugitives; though still so nigh them that to the unpracticed ears of David and the two females it appeared as if they whistled within a few inches of the organs. The outcry was renewed, and the order, not only to fire again, but to pursue, was too plainly audible. When Heyward briefly explained the meaning of the words they heard, Hawkeye halted and spoke with quick decision and great firmness.

"Let us deliver our fire," he said; "they will believe it a sortie, and give way, or they will wait for re-enforcements."

The scheme was well conceived, but failed in its effect. The instant the French heard the pieces, it seemed as if

the plain was alive with men, muskets rattling along its whole extent, from the shores of the lake to the furthest boundary of the woods.

"We shall draw their entire army upon us, and bring on a general assault," said Duncan: "lead on, my friend, for your life and ours."

The scout seemed willing to comply; but, in the hurry of the moment and in the change of position, he had lost the direction. In vain he turned either cheek towards the light air; they felt equally cool. In this dilemma, Uncas lighted on the furrow of the cannon ball, where it had cut the ground in three adjacent ant-hills.

"Give me the range!" said Hawkeye, bending to catch a glimpse of the direction, and then instantly moving onward.

Cries, oaths, voices calling to each other, and the reports of muskets, were now quick and incessant, and apparently on every side of them. Suddenly, a strong glare of light flashed across the scene, the fog rolled upwards in thick wreaths, and several cannon belched across the plain, and the roar was thrown heavily back from the bellowing echoes of the mountain.

"'Tis from the fort!" exclaimed Hawkeye, turning short on his tracks; "and we, like stricken fools, were rushing to the woods, under the very knives of the Maquas."

The instant their mistake was rectified, the whole party retraced the error with the utmost diligence. Duncan willingly relinquished the support of Cora to the arm of Uncas, and Cora as readily accepted the welcome assistance. Men, hot and angry in pursuit, were evidently on their footsteps, and each instant threatened their capture, if not their destruction.

"Point de quartier aux coquins!" cried an eager pursuer, who seemed to direct the operations of the enemy.

"Stand firm, and be ready my gallant 60ths!" suddenly exclaimed a voice above them; "wait to see the enemy; fire low, and sweep the glaciis."

"Father! father!" exclaimed a pierc-

ing cry from out the mist; "it is I! Alice! thy own Elsie! spare, O, save your daughters!"

"Hold!" shouted the former speaker, in the awful tones of parental agony, the sound reaching even to the woods, and rolling back in solemn echo. "'Tis she! God has restored me my children! Throw open the sally-port; to the field, 60ths, to the field; pull not a trigger, lest ye kill my lambs! Drive off these dogs of France with your steel."

Duncan heard the grating of the rusty hinges, and darting to the spot, directed by the sound, he met a long line of dark-red warriors, passing swiftly towards the glaciis. He knew them for his own battalion of the royal Americans, and flying to their head, soon swept every trace of his pursuers from before the works.

For an instant, Cora and Alice had stood trembling and bewildered by this unexpected desertion; but, before either had leisure for speech, or even thought, an officer of gigantic frame, whose locks were bleached with years and service, but whose air of military grandeur had been rather softened than destroyed by time, rushed out of the body of the mist, and folded them to his bosom, while large scalding tears rolled down his pale and wrinkled cheeks, and he exclaimed, in the peculiar accent of Scotland—

"For this I thank thee, Lord! Let danger come as it will, thy servant is now prepared!"

CHAPTER XV.

Then go we in, to know his embassy;
Which I could, with ready guess, declare,
Before the Frenchmen speak a word of it.

—KING HENRY V.

A FEW succeeding days were passed amid the privations, the uproar, and the dangers of the siege, which was vigorously pressed by a power against whose approaches Munro possessed no competent means of resistance. It appeared as if Webb, with his army, which lay slumbering on the banks of the Hudson, had utterly forgotten the strait to which his

countrymen were reduced. Montcalm had filled the woods of the portage with his savages, every yell and whoop from whom rang through the British encampment, chilling the hearts of men who were already but too much disposed to magnify the danger.

Not so, however, with the besieged. Animated by the words and stimulated by the examples of their leaders, they had found their courage, and maintained their ancient reputation with a zeal that did justice to the stern character of their commander. As if satisfied with the toil of marching through the wilderness to encounter his enemy, the French general, though of approved skill, had neglected to seize the adjacent mountains, whence the besieged might have been exterminated with impunity, and which, in the more modern warfare of the country, would not have been neglected for a single hour. This sort of contempt for eminences, or rather dread of the labor of ascending them, might have been termed the besetting weakness of the simplicity of the Indian contests in which, from the nature of the combats, and the density of the forests, fortresses were rare, and artillery next to useless. The carelessness engendered by these usages descended even to the war of the revolution, and lost the States the important fortress of Ticonderoga, opening the way for the army of Burgoyne into what was then the bosom of the country. We look back at this ignorance or infatuation, which ever it may be called, with wonder, knowing that the neglect of an eminence whose difficulties, like those of Mount Defiance, have been so greatly exaggerated, would, at the present time, prove fatal to the reputation of the engineer who had planned the works at their base, or to that of the general whose lot it was to defend them.

The tourist, the valetudinarian, or the amateur of the beauties of Nature, who, in the train of his four-in-hand, now rolls through the scenes we have attempted to describe in quest of information, health or pleasure, or floats steadily towards his object on those artificial waters which have sprung up under the administration

of a statesman* who has dared to stake his political character on the hazardous issue, is not to suppose that his ancestors traversed those hills or struggled with the same currents with equal facility. The transportation of a single heavy gun was often considered equal to a victory gained; if, happily, the difficulties of the passage had not so far separated it from its necessary concomitant, the ammunition, as to render it no more than a useless tube of unwieldy iron.

The evils of this state of things pressed heavily on the fortunes of the resolute Scotsman who now defended William Henry. Though his adversary neglected the hills, he had planted his batteries with judgment on the plain, and caused them to be served with vigor and skill. Against this assault the besieged could only oppose the imperfect and hasty preparations of a fortress in the wilderness.

It was in the afternoon of the fifth day of the siege, and the fourth of his own service in it, that Major Heyward profited by a parley that had just been beaten, by repairing to the ramparts of one of the water bastions, to breathe the cool air from the lake, and to take a survey of the progress of the siege. He was alone, if the solitary sentinel who paced the mound be excepted; for the artillerists had hastened also to profit by the temporary suspension of their arduous duties. The evening was delightfully calm, and the light air from the limpid water fresh and soothing. It seemed as if, with the termination to the roar of artillery and the plunging of shot, Nature had also seized the moment to assume her mildest and most captivating form. The sun poured down his parting glory on the scene, without the oppression of those fierce rays that belong to the climate and the season. The mountains looked green, and fresh, and lovely; tempered with the milder light, or softened in shadow, as thin vapors floated between them and the sun. The numerous islands rested on the bosom of the Horican, some low and sunken, as if imbedded in the waters, and others appear-

* Evidently the late De Witt Clinton, who died Governor of New York, in 1828.

ing to hover above the element in little hillocks of green velvet, among which the fishermen of the beleaguering army peacefully rowed their skiffs, or floated at rest on the glassy mirror, in quiet pursuit of their employment.

The scene was at once animated and still. All that pertained to Nature was sweet, or simply grand; while those parts which depended on the temper and movements of man were lively and playful.

Two little spotless flags were abroad, the one on a salient angle of the fort, and the other on the advanced battery of the besiegers; emblems of the truce which existed, not only to the acts, but it would seem, also, to the enmity of the combatants.

Behind these, again, swung, heavily opening and closing in silken folds, the rival standards of England and France.

A hundred gay and thoughtless young Frenchmen were drawing a net to the pebbly beach, within dangerous proximity to the sullen but silent cannon of the fort, while the eastern mountain was sending back the loud shouts and gay merriment that attended their sport. Some were rushing eagerly to enjoy the aquatic games of the lake, and others were already toiling their way up the neighboring hills, with the restless curiosity of their nation. To all these sports and pursuits, those of the enemy who watched the besieged, and the besieged themselves, were, however, merely the idle though sympathizing spectators. Here and there a picket had, indeed, raised a song, or mingled in a dance, which had drawn the dusky savages around them, from their lairs in the forest. In short, everything wore rather the appearance of a day of pleasure, than of an hour stolen from the dangers and toil of a bloody and vindictive warfare.

Duncan had stood in a musing attitude, contemplating this scene a few minutes, when his eyes were directed to the glacis in front of the sally-port already mentioned by the sounds of approaching footsteps. He walked to an angle of the bastion, and beheld the scout advancing, under the

custody of a French officer, to the body of the fort. The countenance of Hawkeye was haggard and careworn, and his air dejected, as though he felt the deepest degradation at having fallen into the power of his enemies. He was without his favorite weapon, and his arms were even bound behind him with thongs, made of the skin of a deer. The arrival of flags to cover the messengers of summons had occurred so often of late, that when Heyward first threw his careless glance on this group, he expected to see another of the officers of the enemy charged with a similar office; but the instant he recognized the tall person, and still sturdy, though downcast, features of his friend, the woodsman, he started with surprise, and turned to descend from the bastion into the bosom of the work.

The sounds of other voices, however, caught his attention, and for a moment caused him to forget his purpose. At the inner angle of the mound he met the sisters, walking along the parapet, in search, like himself, of air and relief from confinement. They had not met since that painful moment when he deserted them on the plain, only to assure their safety. He had parted from them, worn with care and jaded with fatigue; he now saw them refreshed and blooming, though timid and anxious. Under such an inducement, it will cause no surprise that the young man lost sight for a time of other objects in order to address them. He was, however, anticipated by the voice of the ingenuous and youthful Alice.

"Ah! thou truant! thou recreant knight! he who abandons his damsels in the very lists!" she cried; "here have we been days, nay, ages, expecting you at our feet, imploring mercy and forgetfulness of your craven backsliding; or, I should rather say, back-running, for verily you fled in a manner that no stricken deer, as our worthy friend the scout would say, could equal!"

"You know that Alice means our thanks and our blessings," added the grave and more thoughtful Cora. "In truth, we have a little wondered why you should so rigidly absent yourself from a place where

the gratitude of the daughters might receive the support of a parent's thanks."

"Your father himself could tell you, that though absent from your presence, I have not been altogether forgetful of your safety," returned the young man; "the mastery of yonder village of huts," pointing to the neighboring entrenched camp, "has been keenly disputed; and he who holds it is sure to be possessed of this fort and that which it contains. My days and my nights have all been passed there since we separated, because I thought that my duty called me thither. But he added, with an air of chagrin which he endeavored, though unsuccessfully, to conceal, "Had I been aware that what I then believed a soldier's conduct could be so construed, shame would have been added to the list of reasons."

"Heyward! — Duncan!" exclaimed Alice, bending forward to read his half-averted countenance until a lock of her golden hair rested on her flushed cheek, and nearly concealed the tear that had started to her eye; "did I think this idle tongue of mine had pained you, I would silence it forever. Cora can say, if Cora would, how justly we have prized your services, and how deep—I had almost said how fervent—is our gratitude."

"And will Cora attest the truth of this?" cried Duncan, suffering the cloud to be chased from his countenance by a smile of open pleasure. "What says our graver sister? Will she find an excuse for the neglect of the knight in the duty of a soldier?"

Cora made no immediate answer, but turned her face towards the water, as if looking on the sheet of the Horian. When she did bend her dark eyes on the young man, they were yet filled with an expression of anguish that at once drove every thought but that of kind solicitude from his mind.

"You are not well, dearest Miss Munro!" he exclaimed; "we have trifled while you are in suffering."

"'Tis nothing," she answered, refusing his offered support with feminine reserve. "That I cannot see the sunny side of the picture of life, like this artless but ardent

enthusiast," she added, laying her hand lightly, but affectionately, on the arm of her sister, "is the penalty of experience, and, perhaps, the misfortune of nature. See," she continued, as if determined to shake off infirmity, in a sense of duty; "look around you, Major Heyward, and tell me what a prospect is this for the daughter of a soldier whose greater happiness is his honor and his military renown."

"Neither ought nor shall be tarnished by circumstances over which he has had no control," Duncan warmly replied. "But your words recall me to my own duty. I go now to your gallant father, to hear his determination in matters of the last moment to the defense. God bless you in every fortune, noble—Cora—I may, and must call you." She frankly gave him her hand, though her lip quivered, and her cheeks gradually became of an ashy paleness. "In every fortune, I know you will be an ornament and honor to your sex. Alice, adieu"—his tone changed from admiration to tenderness—"adieu, Alice; we shall soon meet again; as conquerors, I trust, and amid rejoicings."

Without waiting for an answer from either, the young man threw himself down the grassy steps of the bastion, and moving rapidly across the parade, he was quickly in the presence of their father. Munro was pacing his narrow apartment, with a disturbed air and gigantic strides, as Duncan entered.

"You have anticipated my wishes, Major Heyward," he said; "I was about to request this favor."

"I am sorry to see, sir, that the messenger I so warmly recommended has returned in custody of the French! I hope there is no reason to distrust his fidelity?"

"The fidelity of 'The Long Rifle' is well known to me," returned Munro, "and is above suspicion; though his usual good fortune seems, at last, to have failed. Montcalm has got him, and with the accursed politeness of his nation, he has sent him in with a doleful tale of 'knowing how I valued the fellow, he could not think of retaining him.' A Jesuitical

way that, Major Duncan Heyward, of telling a man of his misfortunes!"

"But the general and his succor!—"

"Did ye look to the south as ye entered, and could ye not see them?" said the old soldier, laughing bitterly. "Hoot! hoot! you're an impatient boy, sir, and cannot give the gentlemen leisure for their march."

"They are coming, then? The scout has said as much?"

"When? and by what path? for the dunce has omitted to tell me this. There is a letter, it would seem, too, and that is the only agreeable part of the matter. For the customary attentions of your Marquis of Montcalm—I warrant me, Duncan, that he of Lothian would buy a dozen such marquises—but, if the news of the letter were bad, the gentility of this French monsieur would certainly compel him to let us know it."

"He keeps the letter, then, while he releases the messenger?"

"Ay, that does he, and all for the sake of what you call your 'bonhomme.' I would venture, if the truth were known, the fellow's grandfather taught the noble science of dancing."

"But what says the scout? he has eyes and ears and a tongue; what verbal report does he make?"

"Oh! sir, he is not wanting in natural organs, and he is free to tell all that he has seen and heard. The whole amount is this: there is a fort of his majesty's on the banks of the Hudson called Edward, in honor of his gracious highness of York, you'll know; and it is well filled with armed men, as such a work should be."

"But was there no movement, no signs of any intentions to advance to our relief?"

"There were the morning and evening parades; and when one of the provincial loons—you'll know, Duncan, you're half a Scotsman yourself—when one of them dropped his powder over his porretch, if it touched the coals, it just burnt!" Then suddenly changing his bitter, ironical manner, to one more grave and thoughtful, he continued; "and yet there might and must be something in that letter which it would be well to know!"

"Our decision should be speedy" said Duncan, gladly availing himself of this change of humor to press the more important objects of their interview. "I cannot conceal from you, sir, that the camp will not be much longer tenable; and, I am sorry to add, that things appear no better in the fort—more than half of the guns are bursted."

"And how should it be otherwise? Some were fished from the bottom of the lake; some have been rusting in the woods since the discovery of the country; and some were never guns at all—mere privatersmen's playthings! Do you think, sir, you can have Woolwich Warren in the midst of a wilderness, three thousand miles from Great Britain?"

"The walls are crumbling about our ears, and provisions begin to fail us," continued Heyward, without regarding this new burst of indignation: "even the men show signs of discontent and alarm."

"Major Heyward," said Munro, turning to his youthful associate with the dignity of his years and superior rank; "I should have served his majesty for half a century, and earned these gray hairs in vain, were I ignorant of all you say, and of the pressing nature of our circumstances; still, there is everything due to the honor of the king's arms and something to ourselves. While there is hope of succor, this fortress will I defend, though it be to be done with pebbles gathered on the lake shore. It is a sight of the letter, therefore, that we want, that we may know the intentions of the man the Earl of Loudon has left among us as his substitute."

"And can I be of service in the matter?"

"Sir, you can; the Marquis of Montcalm has, in addition to his other civilities, invited me to a personal interview between the works and his own camp; in order, as he says, to impart some additional information. Now, I think it would not be wise to show any undue solicitude to meet him, and I would employ you, an officer of rank, as my substitute; for it would but ill comport with the honor of Scotland to let it be said one of her gentlemen was

outdone in civility by a native of any other country on earth."

Without assuming the superogatory task of entering into a discussion of the comparative merits of national courtesy, Duncan cheerfully assented to supply the place of the veteran in the approaching interview. A long and confidential communication now succeeded, during which the young man received some additional insight into his duty, from the experience and native acuteness of his commander, and then the former took his leave.

As Duncan could only act as the representative of the commandant of the fort, the ceremonies which should have accompanied a meeting between the heads of the adverse forces were, of course, dispensed with. The truce still existed, and with a roll and beat of the drum, and covered by a little white flag, Duncan left the sally-port within ten minutes after his instructions were ended. He was received by the French officer in advance with the usual formalities, and immediately accompanied to a distant *marquee* of the renowned soldier who led the forces of France.

The general of the enemy received the youthful messenger, surrounded by his principal officers, and by a swarthy band of the native chiefs, who had followed him to the field, with the warriors of their several tribes. Heyward paused short, when, in glancing his eyes rapidly over the dark group of the latter, he beheld the malignant countenance of Magua, regarding him with the calm but sullen attention which marked the expression of that subtle savage. A slight exclamation of surprise even burst from the lips of the young man; but, instantly recollecting his errand, and the presence in which he stood, he suppressed every appearance of emotion, and turned to the hostile leader, who had already advanced a step to receive him.

The Marquis of Montcalm was, at the period of which we write, in the flower of his age, and, it may be added, in the zenith of his fortunes. But, even in that enviable situation he was affable and distinguished as much for his attention to

the forms of courtesy as for that chivalrous courage which, only two short years afterwards, induced him to throw away his life on the plains of Abraham. Duncan, in turning his eyes from the malign expression of Magua, suffered them to rest with pleasure on the smiling and polished features and the noble military air of the French general.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "*j'ai beaucoup de plaisir à—bah!—où est cet interprète?*"

"Je crois, monsieur, qu'il ne sera pas nécessaire," Heyward modestly replied; "je parle un peu Français."

"Ah! j'en suis bien aise," said Montcalm, taking Duncan familiarly by the arm, and leading him deep into the *marquee*, a little out of earshot; "*je déteste ces fripons-là; on ne sait jamais sur quel pié on est avec eux. Eh, bien, monsieur,*" he continued, still speaking in French; "though I should have been proud of receiving your commandant, I am very happy that he has seen proper to employ an officer so distinguished, and who, I am sure, is so amiable as yourself."

Duncan bowed low, pleased with the compliment, in spite of a most heroic determination to suffer no artifice to allure him into forgetfulness of the interest of his prince; and Montcalm, after a pause of a moment, as if to collect his thoughts, proceeded—

"Your commandant is a brave man, and well qualified to repel my assault. Mais, monsieur, is it not time to begin to take more council of humanity and less of your courage? The one as strongly characterizes the hero as the other."

"We consider the qualities as inseparable," returned Duncan, smiling; "but while we find in the vigor of your excellency every motive to stimulate the one, we can, as yet, see no particular call for the exercise of the other."

Montcalm, in his turn, slightly bowed, but it was with the air of a man too practiced to remember the language of flattery. After musing a moment, he added—

"It is possible my glasses have deceived

me, and that your works resist our cannon better than I had supposed. You know our force?"

"Our accounts vary," said Duncan, carelessly; "the highest, however, has not exceeded twenty thousand men."

The Frenchman bit his lip, and fastened his eyes keenly on the other as if he read his thoughts; then, with a readiness peculiar to himself, he continued, as if assenting to the truth of an enumeration which quite doubled his army—

"It is a poor compliment to the vigilance of us soldiers, monsieur, that, do what we will, we never can conceal our numbers. If it were to be done at all, one would believe it might succeed in these woods. Though you think it too soon to listen to the calls of humanity," he added, smiling archly, "I may be permitted to believe that gallantry is not forgotten by one so young as yourself. The daughters of the commandant, I learn, have passed into the fort since it was invested?"

"It is true, monsieur; but, so far from weakening our efforts, they set us an example of courage in their own fortitude. Were nothing but resolution necessary to repel so accomplished a soldier as M. de Montcalm, I would gladly trust the defense of William Henry to the elder of those ladies."

"We have a wise ordinance in our Salique laws which says 'the crown of France shall never degrade the lance to the distaff,'" said Montcalm, dryly, and with a little hauteur; but instantly adding, with his former frank and easy air, "as all the nobler qualities are hereditary I can easily credit you; though, as I said before, courage has its limits, and humanity must not be forgotten. I trust, monsieur, you come authorized to treat for the surrender of the place?"

"Has your excellency found our defense so feeble as to believe the measure necessary?"

"I should be sorry to have the defense protracted in such a manner as to irritate my red friends there," continued Montcalm, glancing his eyes at the group of grave and attentive Indians without at-

tending to the other's question; "I find it difficult, even now, to limit them to the usages of war."

Heyward was silent; for a painful recollection of the dangers he had so recently escaped came over his mind and recalled the images of those defenseless beings who had shared in all his sufferings.

"Ces messieurs-là," said Montcalm, following up the advantage which he conceived he had gained, "are most formidable when baffled; and it is unnecessary to tell you with what difficulty they are restrained in their anger. Eh bien, monsieur! shall we speak of the terms?"

"I fear your excellency has been deceived as to the strength of William Henry and the resources of its garrison!"

"I have not sat down before Quebec, but an earthen work, that is defended by twenty-three hundred gallant men," was the laconic reply.

"Our mounds are earthen, certainly—nor are they seated on the rocks of Cape Diamond, but they stand on that shore which proved so destructive to Dieskau and his army. There is also a powerful force within a few hours' march of us, which we account upon as part of our means."

"Some six or eight thousand men," returned Montcalm, with much apparent indifference, "whom their leader wisely judges to be safer in their works than in the field."

It was now Heyward's turn to bite his lip with vexation, as the other so coolly alluded to a force which the young man knew to be overrated. Both mused a little while in silence, when Montcalm renewed the conversation in a way that showed he believed the visit of his guest was solely to propose terms of capitulation. On the other hand, Heyward began to throw sundry inducements in the way of the French general to betray the discoveries he had made through the intercepted letter. The artifice of neither, however, succeeded; and after a protracted and fruitless interview Duncan took his leave, favorably impressed with an opinion of the courtesy and talents of the enemy's captain, but as ignorant of

what he came to learn as when he arrived. Montcalm followed him as far as the entrance of the marquee, renewing his invitations to the commandant of the fort to give him an immediate meeting in the open ground, between the two armies.

There they separated, and Duncan returned to the advanced post of the French, accompanied as before; whence he instantly proceeded to the fort, and to the quarters of his own commander.

CHAPTER XVI.

Edg.—Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
—LEAR.

MAJOR HEYWARD found Munro attended only by his daughters. Alice sate upon his knee, parting the gray hairs on the forehead of the old man with her delicate fingers; and whenever he affected to frown on her trifling, appeasing his assumed anger by pressing her ruby lips fondly on his wrinkled brow. Cora was seated nigh them, a calm and amused looker-on; regarding the wayward movements of her more youthful sister with that species of maternal fondness which characterized her love for Alice. Not only the dangers through which they had passed, but those which still impended above them, appeared to be momentarily forgotten in the soothing indulgence of such a family meeting. It seemed as if they had profited by the short truce, to devote an instant to the purest and best affections; the daughters forgetting their fears and the veteran his cares, in the security of the moment. Of this scene Duncan, who in his eagerness to report his arrival had entered unannounced, stood many moments an unobserved and delighted spectator. But the quick and dancing eyes of Alice soon caught a glimpse of his figure reflected from a glass, and she sprang blushing from her father's knee, exclaiming aloud—

“Major Heyward!”

“What of the lad?” demanded her father. “I have sent him to crack a little with the Frenchman. Ha! sir, you are young, and you're nimble! Away with

you, ye baggage; as if there were not troubles enough for a soldier without having his camp filled with such prattling hussies as yourself!”

Alice laughingly followed her sister, who instantly led the way from an apartment where she perceived their presence was no longer desirable. Munro, instead of demanding the result of the young man's mission, paced the room for a few moments, with his hands behind his back, and his head inclined towards the floor, like a man lost in thought. At length he raised his eyes, glistening with a father's fondness, and exclaimed—

“They are a pair of excellent girls, Heyward, and such as any one may boast of.”

“You are not now to learn my opinion of your daughters, Colonel Munro.”

“True, lad, true,” interrupted the impatient old man; “you were about opening your mind more fully on that matter the day you got in; but I did not think it becoming in an old soldier to be talking of nuptial blessings and wedding jokes when the enemies of his king were likely to be unbidden guests at the feast! But I was wrong, Duncan, boy, I was wrong there; and I am now ready to hear what you have to say.”

“Notwithstanding the pleasure your assurance gives me, dear sir, I have, just now, a message from Montcalm——”

“Let the Frenchman and all his host go to the devil, sir!” exclaimed the hasty veteran. “He is not yet master of William Henry, nor shall he ever be, provided Webb proves himself the man he should. No, sir! thank heaven, we are not yet in such a strait that it can be said Munro is too much pressed to discharge the little domestic duties of his own family. Your mother was the only child of my bosom friend, Duncan; and I'll just give you a hearing, though all the knights of St. Louis were in a body at the sally-port, with the French saint at their head, craving to speak a word under favor. A pretty degree of knighthood, sir, is that which can be bought with sugar-hogsheads! and then your two-penny marquisates! The thistle is the order for

dignity and antiquity; the veritable 'nemo me impune lacessit' of chivalry! Ye had ancestors in that degree, Duncan, and they were an ornament to the nobles of Scotland."

Heyward, who perceived that his superior took a malicious pleasure in exhibiting his contempt for the message of the French general, was fain to humor a spleen that he knew would be short-lived; he therefore replied with as much indifference as he could assume on such a subject—

"My request, as you know, sir, went so far as to presume to the honor of being your son."

"Ay, boy, you found words to make yourself very plainly comprehended. But let me ask ye, sir, have ye been as intelligible to the girl?"

"On my honor, no," exclaimed Duncan, warmly; "there would have been an abuse of a confided trust had I taken advantage of my situation for such a purpose."

"Your notions are those of a gentleman, Major Heyward, and well enough in their place. But Cora Munro is a maiden too discreet, and of a mind too elevated and improved, to need the guardianship even of a father."

"Cora!"

"Ay—Cora! we are talking of your pretensions to Miss Munro, are we not, sir?"

"I—I—I was not conscious of having mentioned her name," said Duncan, stammering.

"And to marry whom, then, did you wish my consent, Major Heyward?" demanded the old soldier, erecting himself in the dignity of offended feeling.

"You have another and not less lovely child."

"Alice!" exclaimed the father, in an astonishment equal to that with which Duncan had just repeated the name of her sister.

"Such was the direction of my wishes, sir."

The young man waited in silence the result of the extraordinary effect produced by a communication which, as

it now appeared, was so unexpected. For several minutes Munro paced the chamber with long and rapid strides, his rigid features working convulsively, and every faculty seemingly absorbed in the musings of his own mind. At length he paused directly in front of Heyward and, riveting his eyes upon those of the other, he said, with a lip that quivered violently—

"Duncan Heyward, I have loved you for the sake of him whose blood is in your veins; I have loved you for your own good qualities; and I have loved you because I thought you would contribute to the happiness of my child. But all this love would turn to hatred were I assured that what I so much apprehend is true."

"God forbid that any act or thought of mine should lead to such a change!" exclaimed the young man, whose eye never quailed under the penetrating look it encountered. Without adverting to the impossibility of the other's comprehending those feelings which were hid in his own bosom, Munro suffered himself to be appeased by the unaltered countenance he met, and with a voice sensibly softened, he continued—

"You would be my son, Duncan, and you're ignorant of the history of the man you wish to call your father. Sit ye down, young man, and I will open to you the wounds of a seared heart in as few words as may be suitable."

By this time the message of Montcalm was as much forgotten by him who bore it as by the man for whose ears it was intended. Each drew a chair, and while the veteran communed a few moments with his own thoughts, apparently in sadness, the youth suppressed his impatience in a look and attitude of respectful attention. At length the former spoke—

"You know already, Major Heyward, that my family was both ancient and honorable," commenced the Scotsman; "though it might not altogether be endowed with that amount of wealth that should correspond with its degree. I was, maybe, such an one as yourself when I plighted my faith to Alice Graham, the only child of a neighboring laird of some

estate. But the connection was disagreeable to her father on more accounts than my poverty. I did, therefore, what an honest man should—restored the maiden her troth, and departed the country in the service of my king. I had seen many regions, and had shed much blood in different lands, before duty called me to the islands of the West Indies. There it was my lot to form a connection with one who in time became my wife and the mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman of those isles, by a lady whose misfortune it was, if you will,” said the old man, proudly, “to be descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people. Ay, sir, that is a curse entailed on Scotland by her unnatural union with a foreign and trading people. But could I find a man among them who would dare to reflect on my child, he should feel the weight of a father’s anger! Ha! Major Heyward, you are yourself born at the south, where these unfortunate beings are considered of a race inferior to your own.”

“Tis most unfortunately true, sir,” said Duncan, unable any longer to prevent his eyes from sinking to the floor in embarrassment.

“And you cast it on my child as a reproach! You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards with one so degraded—lovely and virtuous though she be?” fiercely demanded the jealous parent.

“Heaven protect me from a prejudice so unworthy of my reason!” returned Duncan, at the same time conscious of such a feeling, and that as deeply rooted as if it had been ingrafted in his nature. “The sweetness, the beauty, the witchery of your younger daughter, Colonel Munro, might explain my motives without imputing to me this injustice.”

“Ye are right, sir,” returned the old man, again changing his tones to those of gentleness, or rather softness; “the girl is the image of what her mother was at her years and before she had become acquainted with grief. When death deprived me of my wife I returned to Scotland, enriched by the marriage; and would you

think it, Duncan! the suffering angel had remained in the heartless state of celibacy twenty long years, and that for the sake of a man who could forget her! She did more, sir; she overlooked my want of faith, and all difficulties being now removed, she took me for her husband.”

“And became the mother of Alice?” exclaimed Duncan, with an eagerness that might have proved dangerous at a moment when the thoughts of Munro were less occupied than at present.

“She did, indeed,” said the old man, “and dearly did she pay for the blessing she bestowed. But she is a saint in heaven, sir; and it ill becomes one whose foot rests on the grave to mourn a lot so blessed. I had her but a single year, though; a short term of happiness for one who had seen her youth fade in hopeless pining.”

There was something so commanding in the distress of the old man, that Heyward did not dare to venture a syllable of consolation. Munro sat utterly unconscious of the other’s presence, his features exposed and working with the anguish of his regrets, while heavy tears fell from his eyes, and rolled unheeded from his cheeks to the floor. At length he moved, as if suddenly recovering his recollection; when he arose, and taking a single turn across the room, he approached his companion with an air of military grandeur, and demanded,—

“Have you not, Major Heyward, some communication that I should hear from the Marquis de Montcalm?”

Duncan started in his turn, and immediately commenced, in an embarrassed voice, the half-forgotten message. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the evasive though polite manner with which the French general had eluded every attempt of Heyward to worm from him the purport of the communication he had proposed making, or on the decided, though still polished message, by which he now gave his enemy to understand that unless he chose to receive it in person, he should not receive it at all. As Munro listened to the detail of Duncan, the excited feelings of the father gradually gave way be-

fore the obligations of his station, and when the other was done, he saw before him nothing but the veteran, swelling with the wounded feelings of a soldier.

"You have said enough, Major Heyward!" exclaimed the angry old man; "enough to make a volume of commentary on French civility. Here has this gentleman invited me to a conference, and when I send him a capable substitute, for ye're all that, Duncan, though your years are but few, he answers me with a riddle."

"He may have thought less favorably of the substitute, my dear sir; and you will remember that the invitation, which he now repeats, was to the commandant of the works, and not to his second."

"Well, sir, is not a substitute clothed with all the power and dignity of him who grants the commission? He wishes to confer with Munro! Faith, sir, I have much inclination to indulge the man, if it should only be to let him behold the firm countenance we maintain in spite of his numbers and his summons. There might be no bad policy in such a stroke, young man."

Duncan, who believed it of the last importance that they should speedily come at the contents of the letter borne by the scout, gladly encouraged this idea.

"Without doubt, he could gather no confidence by witnessing our indifference," he said.

"You never said truer word. I could wish, sir, that he would visit the works in open day, and in the form of a storming party; that is the least failing method of proving the countenance of an enemy, and would be far preferable to the battering system he has chosen. The beauty and manliness of warfare have been much deformed, Major Heyward, by the arts of your Monsieur Vauban. Our ancestors were far above such scientific cowardice."

"It may be very true, sir; but we are now obliged to repel art by art. What is your pleasure in the matter of the interview?"

"I will meet the Frenchman, and that without fear or delay; promptly, sir, as becomes a servant of my royal master.

Go, Major Heyward, and give them a flourish of the music; and send out a messenger to let them know who is coming. We will follow with a small guard, for such respect is due to one who holds the honor of his king in keeping; hark'ee, Duncan," he added, in a half whisper, though they were alone, "it may be prudent to have some aid at hand, in case there should be treachery at bottom of it all."

The young man availed himself of this order to quit the apartment; and, as the day was fast coming to a close, he hastened, without delay, to make the necessary arrangements. A very few minutes only were necessary to parade a few files, and to despatch an orderly with a flag to announce the approach of the commandant of the fort. When Duncan had done both these he led the guard to the sally-port, near which he found his superior ready, waiting his appearance. As soon as the usual ceremonials of a military departure were observed the veteran and his more youthful companion left the fortress, attended by the escort.

They had proceeded only a hundred yards from the works, when the little array which attended the French general to the conference was seen issuing from the hollow way, which formed the bed of a brook that ran between the batteries of the besiegers and the fort. From the moment that Munro left his own works to appear in front of his enemies, his air had been grand, and his step and countenance highly military. The instant he caught a glimpse of the white plume that waved in the hat of Montcalm, his eye lighted, and age no longer appeared to possess any influence over his vast and still muscular person.

"Speak to the boys to be watchful, sir," he said, in an undertone, to Duncan; "and to look well to their flints and steel, for one is never safe with a servant of these Louis; at the same time, we will show them the front of men in deep security. Ye'll understand me, Major Heyward!"

He was interrupted by the clamor of a drum from the approaching Frenchmen, which was immediately answered, when

each party pushed an orderly in advance, bearing a white flag, and the wary Scotsman halted, with his guard close at his back. As soon as this slight salutation had passed, Montcalm moved towards them with a quick but graceful step, barring his head to the veteran, and dropping his spotless plume nearly to the earth in courtesy. If the air of Munro was more commanding and manly, it wanted both the ease and insinuating polish of that of the Frenchman. Neither spoke for a few moments, each regarding the other with curious and interested eyes. Then, as became his superior rank and the nature of the interview, Montcalm broke the silence. After uttering the usual words of greeting, he turned to Duncan, and continued, with a smile of recognition, speaking always in French—

"I am rejoiced, monsieur, that you have given us the pleasure of your company on this occasion. There will be no necessity to employ an ordinary interpreter; for, in your hands, I feel the same security as if I spoke your language myself."

Duncan acknowledged the compliment, when Montcalm, turning to his guard, which, in imitation of that of their enemies, pressed close upon him, continued—

"En arrière, mes enfans—il fait chaud; retirez-vous un peu."

Before Major Heyward would imitate his proof of confidence, he glanced his eyes around the plain, and beheld with uneasiness the numerous dusky groups of savages, who looked out from the margin of the surrounding woods, curious spectators of the interview.

"Monsieur de Montcalm will readily acknowledge the difference in our situation," he said, with some embarrassment, pointing at the same time towards those dangerous foes who were to be seen in almost every direction. "Were we to dismiss our guard, we should stand here at the mercy of our enemies."

"Monsieur, you have the plighted faith of 'un gentilhomme Français,' for your safety," returned Montcalm, laying his hand impressively on his heart; "it should suffice."

"It shall. Fall back," Duncan added

to the officer who led the escort; "fall back, sir, beyond hearing, and wait for orders."

Munro witnessed this movement with manifest uneasiness; nor did he fail to demand an instant explanation.

"Is it not our interest, sir, to betray no distrust?" retorted Duncan. "Monsieur de Montcalm pledges his word for our safety, and I have ordered the men to withdraw a little, in order to prove how much we depend on his assurance."

"It may be all right, sir, but I have no overweening reliance on the faith of these marquesses or marquis, as they call themselves. Their patents of nobility are too common to be certain that they bear the seal of true honor."

"You forget, dear sir, that we confer with an officer distinguished alike in Europe and America for his deeds. From a soldier of his reputation we can have nothing to apprehend."

The old man made a gesture of resignation, though his rigid features still betrayed his obstinate adherence to a distrust, which he derived from a sort of hereditary contempt of his enemy, rather than from any present signs which might warrant so uncharitable a feeling. Montcalm waited patiently until this little dialogue in demi-voice was ended, when he drew nigher, and opened the subject of their conference.

"I have solicited this interview from your superior, monsieur," he said, "because I believe he will allow himself to be persuaded that he has already done everything which is necessary for the honor of his prince, and will now listen to the admonitions of humanity. I will forever bear testimony that his resistance has been gallant, and was continued as long as there was hope."

When this opening was translated to Munro he answered with dignity, but with sufficient courtesy—

"However I may prize such testimony from Monsieur Montcalm, it will be more valuable when it shall be better merited."

The French general smiled as Duncan gave him the purport of this reply, and observed—

"What is now so freely accorded to approved courage may be refused to useless obstinacy. Monsieur would wish to see my camp and witness for himself our numbers and the impossibility of his resisting them with success?"

"I know that the king of France is well served," returned the unmoved Scotsman, as soon as Duncan ended his translation; "but my own royal master has as many and as faithful troops."

"Though not at hand, fortunately for us," said Montcalm, without waiting, in his ardor, for the interpreter. "There is a destiny in war, to which a brave man knows how to submit with the same courage that he faces his foes."

"Had I been conscious that Monsieur Montcalm was master of the English, I should have spared myself the trouble of so awkward a translation," said the vexed Duncan, dryly; remembering instantly his recent by-play with Munro.

"Your pardon, monsieur," rejoined the Frenchman, suffering a slight color to appear on his dark cheek. "There is a vast difference between understanding and speaking a foreign tongue; you will, therefore, please to assist me still." Then after a short pause, he added, "These hills afford us every opportunity of reconnoitering your works, messieurs, and I am, possibly, as well acquainted with their weak condition as you can be yourselves."

"Ask the French general if his glasses can reach to the Hudson," said Munro, proudly; "and if he knows when and where to expect the army of Webb."

"Let General Webb be his own interpreter," returned the politic Montcalm, suddenly extending an open letter towards Munro as he spoke. "You will there learn, monsieur, that his movements are not likely to prove embarrassing to my army."

The veteran seized the offered paper, without waiting for Duncan to translate the speech, and with an eagerness that betrayed how important he deemed its contents. As his eye passed hastily over the words, his countenance changed from its look of military pride to one of deep

chagrin; his lip began to quiver, and, suffering the paper to fall from his hand, his head dropped upon his chest, like that of a man whose hopes were withered at a single blow. Duncan caught the letter from the ground, and without apology for the liberty he took, he read at a glance its cruel purport. Their common superior, so far from encouraging them to resist, advised a speedy surrender, urging in the plainest language as a reason the utter impossibility of his sending a single man to their rescue.

"Here is no deception!" exclaimed Duncan, examining the billet both inside and out; "this is the signature of Webb, and must be the captured letter."

"The man has betrayed me!" Munro at length bitterly exclaimed; "he has brought dishonor to the door of one where disgrace was never before known to dwell, and shame has he heaped heavily on my gray hairs."

"Say not so," cried Duncan; "we are yet masters of the fort, and of our honor. Let us then sell our lives at such a rate as shall make our enemies believe the purchase too dear."

"Boy, I thank thee," exclaimed the old man, rousing himself from his stupor; "you have, for once, reminded Munro of his duty. We will go back and dig our graves behind those ramparts."

"Messieurs," said Montcalm, advancing towards them a step, in generous interest, "you little know Louis de St. Veran if you believe him capable of profiting by this letter to humble brave men or to build up a dishonest reputation for himself. Listen to my terms before you leave me."

"What says the Frenchman?" demanded the veteran sternly; "does he make a merit of having captured a scout with a note from headquarters? Sir, he had better raise this siege, to go and sit down before Edward if he wishes to frighten his enemy with words."

Duncan explained the other's meaning.

"Monsieur de Montcalm, we will hear you," the veteran added more calmly, as Duncan ended.

"To retain the fort is now impossible,"

CHAPTER XVII.

said his liberal enemy ; " it is necessary to the interests of my master that it should be destroyed ; but as for yourselves and your brave comrades, there is no privilege dear to a soldier that shall be denied."

" Our colors ?" demanded Heyward.

" Carry them to England and show them to your king."

" Our arms ?"

" Keep them ; none can use them better."

" Our march ; the surrender of the place ?"

" Shall all be done in a way most honorable to yourselves."

Duncan now turned to explain these proposals to his commander, who heard him with amazement and a sensibility that was deeply touched by so unusual and unexpected generosity.

" Go you, Duncan," he said ; " go with this marquess, as indeed marquess he should be ; go to his marquess and arrange it all. I have lived to see two things in my old age that never did I expect to behold—an Englishman afraid to support a friend, and a Frenchman too honest to profit by his advantage."

So saying, the veteran again dropped his head to his chest, and returned slowly towards the fort, exhibiting, by the dejection of his air, to the anxious garrison a harbinger of evil tidings.

From the shock of this unexpected blow the haughty feelings of Munro never recovered ; but from that moment there commenced a change in his determined character which accompanied him to a speedy grave. Duncan remained to settle the terms of the capitulation. He was seen to re-enter the works during the first watches of the night, and immediately after a private conference with the commandant, to leave them again. It was then openly announced that hostilities must cease, Munro having signed a treaty by which the place was to be yielded to the enemy, with the morning ; the garrison to retain their arms, their colors and their baggage, and consequently, according to military opinion, their honor.

Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.
The web is wove. The work is done.

—GRAY.

THE hostile armies, which lay in the wilds of the Horican, passed the night of the ninth of August, 1757, much in the manner they would had they encountered on the fairest field of Europe. While the conquered were still, sullen, and dejected, the victors triumphed. But there are limits alike to grief and joy ; and long before the watches of the morning came, the stillness of those boundless woods was only broken by a gay call from some exulting young Frenchman of the advanced pickets, or a menacing challenge from the fort, which sternly forbade the approach of any hostile footsteps before the stipulated moment. Even these occasional threatening sounds ceased to be heard in that dull hour which precedes the day, at which period a listener might have sought in vain any evidence of the presence of those armed powers that then slumbered on the shores of the " holy lake."

It was during these moments of deep silence that the canvas which concealed the entrance to a spacious marquess in the French encampment was shoved aside and a man issued from beneath the drapery into the open air. He was enveloped in a cloak that might have been intended as a protection from the chilling damps of the woods, but which served equally well as a mantle to conceal his person. He was permitted to pass the grenadier, who watched over the slumbers of the French commander, without interruption, the man making the usual salute which betokens military deference, as the other passed swiftly through the little city of tents, in the direction of William Henry. Whenever this unknown individual encountered one of the numberless sentinels who crossed his path, his answer was prompt and, as it appeared, satisfactory ; for he was uniformly allowed to proceed, without further interrogation.

With the exception of such repeated but brief interruptions, he had moved silently from the center of the camp, to its

most advanced outposts, when he drew nigh the soldier who held his watch nearest to the works of the enemy. As he approached he was received with the usual challenge—

“*Qui vive ?*”

“*France,*” was the reply.

“*Le mot e’ordre ?*”

“*La victoire,*” said the other, drawing so nigh as to be heard in a loud whisper.

“*C’est bien,*” returned the sentinel, throwing his musket from the charge to his shoulder; “*vous vous promenez bien matin, monsieur.*”

“*Il est necessaire d’être vigilant, mon enfant ;*” the other observed, dropping a fold of his cloak, and looking the other close in the face, as he passed him, still continuing his way towards the British fortification. The man started; his arms rattled heavily, as he threw them forward in the lowest and most respectful salute; and when he had again recovered his piece he turned to walk his post, muttering between his teeth—

“*Il faut être vigilant, en vérité ! je crois que nous avons là, un caporal qui ne dort jamais !*”

The officer proceeded, without affecting to hear the words which escaped the sentinel in his surprise; nor did he again pause until he had reached the low strand, and in a somewhat dangerous vicinity to the western water bastion of the fort. The light of an obscure moon was just sufficient to render objects, though dim, perceptible in their outlines. He therefore took the precaution to place himself against the trunk of a tree, where he leaned for many minutes, and seemed to contemplate the dark and silent mounds of the English works in profound attention. His gaze at the ramparts was not that of a curious or idle spectator; but his looks wandered from point to point, denoting his knowledge of military usages and betraying that his search was not unaccompanied by distrust. At length he appeared satisfied; and having cast his eyes impatiently upward towards the summit of the eastern mountain, as if anticipating the approach of the morning, he was in

the act of turning on his footsteps, when a light sound on the nearest angle of the bastion caught his ear and induced him to remain.

Just then a figure was seen to approach the edge of the rampart, where it stood, apparently contemplating in its turn the distant tents of the French encampment. Its head was then turned towards the east, as though equally anxious for the appearance of light, when the form leaned against the mound and seemed to gaze upon the glassy expanse of the waters, which, like a submarine firmament, glittered with its thousand mimic stars. The melancholy air, the hour, together with the vast frame of the man who thus leaned in musing against the English ramparts, left no doubt as to his person in the mind of the observant spectator. Delicacy, no less than prudence, now urged him to retire, and he had moved cautiously round the body of the tree for that purpose when another sound drew his attention, and once more arrested his footsteps. It was a low and almost inaudible movement of the water, and was succeeded by a grating of pebbles one against the other. In a moment he saw a dark form rise, as it were, out of the lake and steal without further noise to the land, within a few feet of the place where he himself stood. A rifle next slowly rose between his eyes and the watery mirror, but before it could be discharged his own hand was on the lock.

“*Hugh !*” exclaimed the savage, whose treacherous aim was so singularly and so unexpectedly interrupted.

Without making any reply the French officer laid his hand on the shoulder of the Indian and led him in profound silence to a distance from the spot where their subsequent dialogue might have proved dangerous, and where it seemed that one of them, at least, sought a victim. Then, throwing open his cloak so as to expose his uniform and the cross of St. Louis which was suspended at his breast, Montcalm sternly demanded—

“*What means this ! does not my son know that the hatchet is buried between the English and his Canadian Father ?*”

"What can the Hurons do?" returned the savage, speaking also, though imperfectly, in the French language. "Not a warrior has a scalp, and the pale-faces make friends!"

"Ha! Le Renard Subtil! Methinks this is an excess of zeal for a friend who was so late an enemy! How many suns have set since Le Renard struck the war post of the English?"

"Where is that sun?" demanded the sullen savage. "Behind the hill; and it is dark and cold. But when he comes again, it will be bright and warm. Le Subtil is the sun of his tribe. There have been clouds and many mountains between him and his nation; but now he shines, and it is a clear sky!"

"That Le Renard has power with his people, I well know," said Montcalm; "for yesterday he hunted for their scalps, and to-day they hear him at the council fire."

"Magua is a great chief."

"Let him prove it by teaching his nation how to conduct towards our new friends."

"Why did the chief of the Canadas bring his young men into the woods and fire his cannon at the earthen house?" demanded the subtle Indian.

"To subdue it. My master owns the land, and your father was ordered to drive off these English squatters. They have consented to go, and now he calls them enemies no longer."

"Tis well. Magua took the hatchet to color it with blood. It is now bright; when it is red it shall be buried."

"But Magua is pledged not to sully the lilies of France. The enemies of the great king across the salt lake are his enemies: his friends, the friends of the Hurons."

"Friends!" repeated the Indian, in scorn. "Let his father give Magua a hand."

Montcalm, who felt that his influence over the warlike tribes he had gathered was to be maintained by concession rather than by power, complied reluctantly with the other's request. The savage placed the finger of the French commander on a deep scar on his bosom, and then exultingly demanded—

"Does my father know that?"

"What warrior does not? 'tis where a leaden bullet has cut."

"And this?" continued the Indian, who had turned his naked back to the other, his body being without its usual calico mantle.

"This, my son, has been sadly injured, here; who has done this?"

"Magua slept hard in the English wigwams, and the sticks have left their mark," returned the savage with a hollow laugh, which did not conceal the fierce temper that nearly choked him. Then recollecting himself, with sudden and native dignity, he added—"Go; teach your young men it is peace. Le Renard Subtil knows how to speak to a Huron warrior."

Without deigning to bestow further words, or to wait for any answer, the savage cast his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and moved silently through the encampment towards the woods where his own tribe was known to lie. Every few yards as he proceeded he was challenged by the sentinels; but he stalked sullenly onward, utterly disregarding the summons of the soldiers, who only spared his life because they knew the air and tread no less than the obstinate daring of an Indian.

Montcalm lingered long and melancholy on the strand where he had been left by his companion, brooding deeply on the temper which his ungovernable ally had just discovered. Already had his fair fame been tarnished by one horrid scene, and in circumstances fearfully resembling those under which he now found himself. As he mused he became keenly sensible of the deep responsibility they assume who disregard the means to attain their end, and of all the danger of setting in motion an engine which it exceeds human power to control. Then shaking off a train of reflections, that he accounted a weakness in such a moment of triumph, he retraced his steps towards his tent, giving the order as he passed to make the signal that should arouse the army from its slumbers.

The first tap of the French drums was echoed from the bosom of the fort, and

presently the valley was filled with the strains of martial music, rising long, thrilling, and lively above the rattling accompaniment. The horns of the victors sounded merry and cheerful flourishes, until the last laggard of the camp was at his post; but the instant the British fifes had blown their shrill signal they became mute. In the meantime the day had dawned, and when the line of the French army was ready to receive its general the rays of a brilliant sun were glancing along the glittering array. Then that success, which was already so well known, was officially announced; the favored band who were selected to guard the gates of the fort were detailed, and defiled before their chief; the signal of their approach was given, and all the usual preparations for a change of masters were ordered and executed directly under the guns of the contested works.

A very different scene presented itself within the lines of the Anglo-American army. As soon as the warning signal was given, it exhibited all the signs of a hurried and forced departure. The sullen soldiers shouldered their empty tubes and fell into their places, like men whose blood had been heated by the past contest, and who only desired the opportunity to revenge an indignity which was still wounding to their pride, concealed as it was under all the observances of military etiquette. Women and children ran from place to place, some bearing the scanty remnants of their baggage, and others searching in the ranks for those countenances they looked up to for protection.

Munro appeared among his silent troops firm but dejected. It was evident that the unexpected blow had struck deep into his heart, though he struggled to sustain his misfortune with the port of a man.

Duncan was touched at the quiet and impressive exhibition of his grief. He had discharged his own duty, and he now pressed to the side of the old man to know in what particular he might serve him.

"My daughters," was the brief but expressive reply.

"Good heavens! are not arrangements already made for their convenience?"

"To-day I am only a soldier, Major Heyward," said the veteran. "All that you see here claim alike to be my children."

Duncan had heard enough. Without losing one of those moments which had now become so precious, he flew towards the quarters of Munro, in quest of the sisters. He found them on the threshold of the low edifice, already prepared to depart, and surrounded by a clamorous and weeping assemblage of their own sex that had gathered about the place, with a sort of instinctive consciousness that it was the point most likely to be protected. Though the cheeks of Cora were pale and her countenance anxious, she had lost none of her firmness; but the eyes of Alice were inflamed and betrayed how long and bitterly she had wept. They both, however, received the young man with undisguised pleasure; the former, for a novelty, being the first to speak.

"The fort is lost," she said, with a melancholy smile; "though our good name, I trust, remains."

"'Tis brighter than ever. But, dearest Miss Munro, it is time to think less of others and to make some provision for yourself. Military usage—pride—that pride on which you so much value yourself, demands that your father and I should for a little while continue with the troops. Then where to seek a proper protector for you against the confusion and chances of such a scene?"

"None is necessary," returned Cora; "who will dare to injure or insult the daughter of such a father at a time like this?"

"I would not leave you alone," continued the youth, looking about him in a hurried manner, "for the command of the best regiment in the pay of the king. Remember, our Alice is not gifted with all your firmness, and God only knows the terror she might endure."

"You may be right," Cora replied, smiling again, but far more sadly than before. "Listen; chance has already sent us a friend when he is most needed."

Duncan did listen, and on the instant

comprehended her meaning. The low and serious sounds of the sacred music, so well known to the eastern provinces, caught his ear and instantly drew him to an apartment in an adjacent building, which had already been deserted by its customary tenants. There he found David, pouring out his pious feelings through the only medium in which he ever indulged. Duncan waited until by the cessation of the movement of the hand he believed the strain was ended, when, by touching his shoulder, he drew the attention of the other to himself, and in a few words explained his wishes.

"Even so," replied the single-minded disciple of the King of Israel, when the young man had ended; "I have found much that is comely and melodious in the maidens, and it is fitting that we who have consorted in so much peril should abide together in peace. I will attend them when I have completed my morning praise, to which nothing is now wanting but the doxology. Wilt thou bear a part, friend? The meter is common, and the tune 'Southwell.'"

Then extending the little volume and giving the pitch of the air anew with considerate attention, David recommenced and finished his strains, with a fixedness of manner that it was not easy to interrupt. Heyward was fain to wait until the verse was ended, when, seeing David relieving himself from the spectacles and replacing the book, he continued—

"It will be your duty to see that none dare to approach the ladies with any rude intention, or to offer insult or taunt at the misfortune of their brave father. In this task you will be seconded by the domestics of their household."

"Even so."

"It is possible that the Indians and stragglers of the enemy may intrude, in which case you will remind them of the terms of the capitulation and threaten to report their conduct to Montcalm. A word will suffice."

"If not I have that here which shall," returned David, exhibiting his book with an air in which meekness and confidence were singularly blended. "Here are words

which, uttered, or rather thundered, with proper emphasis and in measured time, shall quiet the most unruly temper:—

'Why rage the heathen furiously?'—"

"Enough," said Heyward, interrupting the burst of his musical invocation; "we understand each other; it is time that we should now assume our respective duties."

Gamut cheerfully assented, and together they sought the females. Cora received her new and somewhat extraordinary protector courteously, at least; and even the pallid features of Alice lighted again with some of their native archness as she thanked Heyward for his care. Duncan took occasion to assure them he had done the best that circumstances permitted, and, as he believed, quite enough for the security of their feelings; of danger there was none. He then spoke gladly of his intention to rejoin them the moment he had led the advance a few miles towards the Hudson, and immediately took his leave.

By this time the signal of departure had been given, and the head of the English column was in motion. The sisters started at the sound, and glancing their eyes around, they saw the white uniforms of the French grenadiers, who had already taken possession of the gates of the fort. At that moment an enormous cloud seemed to pass suddenly above their heads, and looking upward, they discovered that they stood beneath the white folds of the standard of France.

"Let us go," said Cora; "this is no longer a fit place for the children of an English officer."

Alice clung to the arm of her sister, and together they left the parade, accompanied by the moving throng that surrounded them.

As they passed the gates, the French officers, who had learned their rank, bowed often and low, forbearing, however, to intrude those attentions which they saw, with peculiar tact, might not be agreeable. As every vehicle and each beast of burden was occupied by the sick and wounded, Cora had decided to endure the fatigues of a foot march,

rather than interfere with their comforts. Indeed, many a maimed and feeble soldier was compelled to drag his exhausted limbs in the rear of the columns, for the want of the necessary means of conveyance, in that wilderness. The whole, however, was in motion: the weak and wounded, groaning, and in suffering; their comrades, silent and sullen; and the women and children in terror, they knew not of what.

As the confused and timid throng left the protecting mounds of the fort, and issued on the open plain, the whole scene was at once presented to their eyes. At a little distance on the right, and somewhat in the rear, the French army stood to their arms, Montcalm having collected his parties so soon as his guards had possession of the works. They were attentive but silent observers of the proceedings of the vanquished, failing in none of their stipulated military honors, and offering no taunt or insult, in their success, to their less fortunate foes. Living masses of the English, to the amount, in the whole, of near three thousand, were moving slowly across the plain, towards the common center, and gradually approached each other, as they converged to the point of their march, a vista cut through the lofty trees where the road to the Hudson entered the forest. Along the sweeping borders of the woods hung a dark cloud of savages, eyeing the passage of their enemies, and hovering at a distance, like vultures, who were only kept from swooping on their prey by the presence and restraint of a superior army. A few had straggled among the conquered columns, where they stalked in sullen discontent; attentive, though, as yet, passive observers of the moving multitude.

The advance, with Heyward at its head, had already reached the defile, and was slowly disappearing, when the attention of Cora was drawn to a collection of stragglers by the sounds of contention. A truant provincial was paying the forfeit of his disobedience by being plundered of those very effects which had caused him to desert his place in the

ranks. The man was of powerful frame, and too avaricious to part with his goods without a struggle. Individuals from either party interfered; the one side to prevent and the other to aid in the robbery. Voices grew loud and angry, and a hundred savages appeared, as it were by magic, where a dozen only had been seen a minute before. It was then that Cora saw the form of Magua gliding among his countrymen and speaking with his fatal and artful eloquence. The mass of women and children stopped and hovered together like alarmed and fluttering birds. But the cupidity of the Indian was soon gratified, and the different bodies again moved slowly onward.

The savages now fell back, and seemed content to let their enemies advance without further molestation. But as the female crowd approached them, the gaudy colors of a shawl attracted the eyes of a wild and untutored Huron. He advanced to seize it, without the least hesitation. The woman, more in terror than through love of the ornament, wrapped her child in the coveted article and folded both more closely to her bosom. Cora was in the act of speaking, with an intent to advise the woman to abandon the trifle, when the savage relinquished his hold of the shawl and tore the screaming infant from her arms. Abandoning everything to the greedy grasp of those around her, the mother darted, with distraction in her mien, to reclaim her child. The Indian smiled grimly and extended one hand, in sign of a willingness to exchange, while with the other he flourished the babe over his head, holding it by the feet, as if to enhance the value of the ransom.

"Here—here—there—all—any—everything!" exclaimed the breathless woman, tearing the lighter articles of dress from her person, with ill-directed and trembling fingers—"take all, but give me my babe."

The savage spurned the worthless rags, and perceiving that the shawl had already become a prize to another, his bantering but sullen smile changing to a gleam of ferocity, he dashed the head of the infant against a rock, and cast its

quivering remains to her very feet. For an instant, the mother stood like a statue of despair, looking wildly down at the unseemly object, which had so lately nestled in her bosom and smiled in her face; and then she raised her eyes and countenance towards heaven, as if calling on God to curse the perpetrator of the foul deed.

She was spared the sin of such a prayer; for, maddened at his disappointment, and excited at the sight of blood, the Huron mercifully drove his tomahawk into her own brain. The mother sank under the blow, and fell, grasping at her child, in death, with the same engrossing love that had caused her to cherish it when living.

At that dangerous moment, Magua placed his hands to his mouth, and raised the fatal and appalling whoop. The scattered Indians started at the well-known cry, as coursers bound at the signal to quit the goal; and, directly, there arose such a yell along the plain, and through the arches of the wood, as seldom burst from human lips before. They who heard it, listened with a curdling horror at the heart, little inferior to that dread which may be expected to attend the blasts of the final summons.

More than two thousand raving savages broke from the forest at the signal, and threw themselves across the fatal plain with instinctive alacrity. We shall not dwell on the revolting horrors that succeeded. Death was everywhere, and in his most terrific and disgusting aspects. Resistance only served to inflame the murderers, who inflicted their furious blows long after their victims were beyond the power of their resentment. The flow of blood might be likened to the outbreaking of a torrent, and as the natives became heated and maddened by the sight, many among them even kneeled to the earth, and drank freely, exultingly, hellishly, of the crimson tide.

The trained bodies of the troops threw themselves quickly into solid masses, endeavoring to awe their assailants by the imposing appearance of a military front. The experiment in some measure succeeded, though far too many suffered their unloaded muskets to be torn from their

hands in the vain hope of appeasing the savages.

In such a scene none had leisure to note the fleeting moments. It might have been ten minutes (it seemed an age), that the sisters had stood riveted to one spot, horror-stricken and nearly helpless. When the first blow was struck, their screaming companions had pressed upon them in a body, rendering flight impossible; and now that fear or death had scattered most, if not all, from around them, they saw no avenue open but such as conducted to the tomahawks of their foes. On every side arose shrieks, groans, exhortations and curses. At this moment Alice caught a glimpse of the vast form of her father, moving rapidly across the plain in the direction of the French army. He was, in truth, proceeding to Montcalm, fearless of every danger, to claim the tardy escort for which he had before conditioned. Fifty glittering axes and barbed spears were offered unheeded at his life, but the savages respected his rank and calmness even in their fury. The dangerous weapons were brushed aside by the still nervous arm of the veteran, or fell of themselves, after menacing an act that it would seem no one had courage to perform. Fortunately, the vindictive Magua was searching for his victim in the very band the veteran had just quitted.

"Father — father — we are here!" shrieked Alice, as he passed at no great distance, without appearing to heed them. "Come to us, father, or we die!"

The cry was repeated, and in terms and tones that might have melted a heart of stone, but it was unanswered. Once, indeed, the old man appeared to catch the sounds, for he paused and listened; but Alice had dropped senseless on the earth, and Cora had sunk at her side, hovering in untiring tenderness over her lifeless form. Munro shook his head in disappointment, and proceeded, bent on the high duty of his station.

"Lady," said Gamut, who, helpless and useless as he was, had not yet dreamed of deserting his trust, "it is the jubilee of the devils, and this is not the meet place for Christians to tarry in. Let us up and fly."

"Go," said Cora, still gazing at her unconscious sister; "save thyself. To me thou canst not be of further use."

David comprehended the unyielding character of her resolution by the simple but expressive gesture that accompanied her words. He gazed, for a moment, at the dusky forms that were acting their hellish rites on every side of him, and his tall person grew more erect, while his chest heaved, and every feature swelled, and seemed to speak with the power of the feelings by which he was governed.

"If the Jewish boy might tame the evil spirit of Saul by the sound of his harp, and the words of sacred song, it may not be amiss," he said, "to try the potency of music here."

Then raising his voice to its highest tones, he poured out a strain so powerful as to be heard even amid the din of that bloody field. More than one savage rushed towards them, thinking to rifle the unprotected sisters of their attire and bear away their scalps; but when they found this strange and unmoved figure riveted to his post, they paused to listen. Astonishment soon changed to admiration, and they passed on to other and less courageous victims, openly expressing their satisfaction at the firmness with which the white warrior sang his death song. Encouraged and deluded by his success, David exerted all his powers to extend what he believed so holy an influence. The unwonted sounds caught the ears of a distant savage, who flew raging from group to group, like one who, scorning to touch the vulgar herd, hunted for some victim more worthy of his renown. It was Magua, who uttered a yell of pleasure when he beheld his ancient prisoners again at his mercy.

"Come," he said, laying his soiled hands on the dress of Cora, "the wigwam of the Huron is still open. Is it not better than this place?"

"Away!" cried Cora, veiling her eyes from his revolting aspect.

The Indian laughed tauntingly as he held up his reeking hand, and answered, "It is red, but it comes from white veins!"

"Monster! there is blood, oceans of blood, upon thy soul; thy spirit has moved this scene."

"Magua is a great chief!" returned the exulting savage:—"will the dark hair go to his tribe?"

"Never! strike, if thou wilt, and complete thy revenge."

He hesitated a moment; and then catching the light and senseless form of Alice in his arms, the subtle Indian moved swiftly across the plain towards the woods.

"Hold!" shrieked Cora, following wildly on his footsteps; "release the child! wretch! what is't you do?"

But Magua was deaf to her voice; or, rather, he knew his power, and was determined to maintain it.

"Stay—lady—stay," called Gamut after the unconscious Cora. "The holy charm is beginning to be felt, and soon shall thou see this horrid tumult stilled."

Perceiving that, in his turn, he was unheeded, the faithful David followed the distracted sister, raising his voice again in sacred song, and sweeping the air to the measure with his long arm in diligent accompaniment. In this manner they traversed the plain through the flying, the wounded and the dead. The fierce Huron was at any time sufficient for himself and the victim that he bore; though Cora would have fallen more than once under the blows of her savage enemies but for the extraordinary being who stalked in her rear, and who now appeared to the astonished native gifted with the protecting spirit of madness.

Magua, who knew how to avoid the more pressing dangers, and also to elude pursuit, entered the woods through a low ravine, where he quickly found the Narragansetts which the travelers had abandoned so shortly before awaiting his appearance in custody of a savage as fierce and malign in his expression as himself. Laying Alice on one of the horses he made a sign to Cora to mount the other.

Notwithstanding the horror excited by the presence of her captor, there was a present relief in escaping from the bloody

scene enacting on the plain to which Cora could not be altogether insensible. She took her seat, and held forth her arms for her sister with an air of entreaty and love that even the Huron could not deny. Placing Alice, then, on the same animal with Cora, he seized the bridle and commenced his route by plunging deeper into the forest. David, perceiving that he was left alone, utterly disregarded as a subject too worthless even to destroy, threw his long limb across the saddle of the beast they had deserted, and made such progress in the pursuit as the difficulties of the path permitted.

They soon began to ascend; but as the motion had a tendency to revive the dormant faculties of her sister, Cora was too much divided between the tenderest solicitude in her behalf and in listening to the cries which were still too audible on the plain to note the direction in which they journeyed. When, however, they gained the flattened surface of the mountain-top and approached the eastern precipice, she recognized the spot to which she had once before been led under the more friendly auspices of the scout. Here Magua suffered them to dismount; and, notwithstanding their own captivity, the curiosity which seems inseparable from horror induced them to gaze at the sickening sight below.

The cruel work was still unchecked. On every side the captured were flying before their relentless persecutors, while the armed columns of the Christian king stood fast in an apathy which has never been explained, and which has left an immovable blot on the otherwise fair escutcheon of their leader. Nor was the sword of death stayed until cupidity got the mastery of revenge. Then, indeed, the shrieks of the wounded and the yell of their murderers grew less frequent, until finally the cries of horror were lost to their ear, or were drowned in the long, loud and piercing whoops of the triumphant savages.*

*The accounts of the number who fell in this unhappy affair vary between five and fifteen hundred.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Why, anything;
An honorable murderer, if you will;
For naught I did in hate, but all in honor.
—OTHELLO.

THE bloody and inhuman scene, rather incidentally mentioned than described in the preceding chapter, is conspicuous in the pages of colonial history, by the merited title of "The Massacre of William Henry." It so far deepened the stain which a previous and very similar event had left upon the reputation of the French commander, that it was not entirely erased by his early and glorious death. It is now becoming obscured by time; and thousands, who know that Montcalm died like a hero on the plains of Abraham, have yet to learn how much he was deficient in that moral courage without which no man can be truly great. Pages might be written to prove, from this illustrious example, the defects of human excellence; to show how easy it is for generous sentiments, high courtesy, and chivalrous courage, to lose their influence beneath their chilling blight of selfishness, and to exhibit to the world a man who was great in all the minor attributes of character, but who was found wanting when it became necessary to prove how much principle is superior to policy. But the task would exceed our prerogatives; and, as history, like love, is so apt to surround her heroes with an atmosphere of imaginary brightness, it is probable that Louis de Saint Veran will be viewed by posterity only as the gallant defender of his country, while his cruel apathy on the shores of the Oswego and of the Horican will be forgotten. Deeply regretting this weakness on the part of a sister muse, we shall at once retire from her sacred precincts, within the proper limits of our humble vocation.

The third day from the capture of the fort was drawing to a close, but the business of the narrative must still detain the reader on the shores of the "holy lake." When last seen, the environs of the works were filled with violence and uproar. They were now possessed by stillness and death. The blood-stained conquerors had depart-

ed; and their camp, which had so lately rung with the merry rejoicings of a victorious army, lay a silent and deserted city of huts. The fortress was a smoldering ruin; charred rafters, fragments of exploded artillery and rent mason-work covering its earthen mounds in confused disorder.

A frightful change had also occurred in the season. The sun had hid its warmth behind an impenetrable mass of vapor, and hundreds of human forms, which had blackened beneath the fierce heats of August, were stiffening in their deformity before the blasts of a premature November. The curling and spotless mists, which had been seen sailing above the hills towards the north, were now returning in an interminable dusky sheet that was urged along by the fury of a tempest. The crowded mirror of the Horican was gone; and, in its place, the green and angry waters lashed the shores, as if indignantly casting back its impurities to the polluted strand. Still the clear fountain retained a portion of its charmed influence, but it reflected only the somber gloom that fell from the impending heavens. That humid and congenial atmosphere which commonly adorned the view, veiling its harshness and softening its asperities, had disappeared, and the northern air poured across the waste of water so harsh and unmingled that nothing was left to be conjectured by the eye or fashioned by the fancy.

The fiercer element had cropped the verdure of the plain, which looked as though it were scathed by the consuming lightning. But, here and there, a dark green tuft rose in the midst of the desolation; the earliest fruits of a soil that had been fattened with human blood. The whole landscape which, seen by a favoring light, and in a genial temperature, had been found so lovely, appeared now like some pictured allegory of life, in which objects were arrayed in their harshest but truest colors, and without the relief of any shadowing.

The solitary and arid blades of grass arose from the passing gusts fearfully perceptible; the bold and rocky mountains were too distinct in their barrenness, and

the eye even sought relief in vain by attempting to pierce the illimitable void of heaven, which was shut to its gaze by the dusky sheet of ragged and driving vapor.

The wind blew unequally; sometimes sweeping heavily along the ground, seeming to whisper its moanings in the cold ears of the dead, then, rising in a shrill and mournful whistling, it entered the forest with a rush that filled the air with the leaves and branches it scattered in its path. Amid the unnatural shower, a few hungry ravens struggled with the gale; but no sooner was the green ocean of woods which stretched beneath them passed, than they gladly stopped, at random, to their hideous banquet.

In short, it was a scene of wildness and desolation, and it appeared as if all who had profanely entered it had been stricken at a blow by the relentless arm of death. But the prohibition had ceased; and, for the first time since the perpetrators of those foul deeds which had assisted to disfigure the scene were gone, living human beings had now presumed to approach the place.

About an hour before the setting of the sun, on the day already mentioned, the forms of five men might have been seen issuing from the narrow vista of trees where the path to the Hudson entered the forest, and advancing in the direction of the ruined works. At first their progress was slow and guarded, as though they entered with reluctance amid the horrors of the spot or dreaded the renewal of its frightful incidents. A light figure preceded the rest of the party with the caution and activity of a native; ascending every hillock to reconnoiter, and indicating by gestures to his companions the route he deemed it most prudent to pursue. Nor were those in the rear wanting in every caution and foresight known to forest warfare. One among them—he also was an Indian—moved a little on one flank, and watched the margin of the woods with eyes long accustomed to read the smallest sign of danger. The remaining three were white, though clad in vestments adapted, both in quality and color, to their present hazardous pursuit—that

of hanging on the skirts of a retiring army in the wilderness.

The effects produced by the appalling sights that constantly arose in their path to the lake shore were as different as the characters of the respective individuals who composed the party. The youth in front threw serious but furtive glances at the mangled victims, as he stepped lightly across the plain, afraid to exhibit his feelings, and yet too inexperienced to quell entirely their sudden and powerful influence. His red associate, however, was superior to such a weakness. He passed the groups of dead with a steadiness of purpose, and an eye so calm, that nothing but long and inveterate practice could enable him to maintain. The sensations produced in the minds of even the white men were different, though uniformly sorrowful. One, whose gray locks and furrowed lineaments, blending with a martial air and tread, betrayed, in spite of the disguise of a woodman's dress, a man long experienced in scenes of war, was not ashamed to groan aloud whenever a spectacle of more than usual horror came under his view. The young man at his elbow shuddered, but seemed to suppress his feelings in tenderness to his companion. Of them all, the straggler who brought up the rear appeared alone to betray his real thoughts, without fear of observation or dread of consequences. He gazed at the most appalling sight with eyes and muscles that knew not how to waver, but with execrations so bitter and deep as to denote how much he denounced the crime of his enemies.

The readers will perceive at once, in these respective characters, the Mohicans, and their white friend, the scout, together with Munro and Heyward. It was, in truth, the father in quest of his children, attended by the youth who felt so deep a stake in their happiness, and those brave and trusty foresters, who had already proved their skill and fidelity through the trying scenes related.

When Uncas, who moved in front, had reached the center of the plain, he raised a cry that drew his companions in a body to the spot. The young warrior had

halted over a group of females who lay in a cluster, a confused mass of dead. Notwithstanding the revolting horror of the exhibition, Munro and Heyward flew towards the festering heap, endeavoring, with a love that no unseemliness could extinguish, to discover whether any vestiges of those they sought were to be seen among the tattered and many-colored garments. The father and the lover found instant relief in the search; though each was condemned again to experience the misery of an uncertainty that was hardly less insupportable than the most revolting truth. They were standing, silent and thoughtful, around the melancholy pile, when the scout approached. Eying the sad spectacle with an angry countenance, the sturdy woodsman, for the first time since his entering the plain, spoke intelligibly and aloud—

"I have been on many a shocking field, and have followed a trail of blood for weary miles," he said, "but never have I found the hand of the devil so plain as it is here to be seen! Revenge is an Indian feeling, and all who know me know that there is no cross in my veins; but this much will I say—here, in the face of heaven, and with the power of the Lord so manifest in this howling wilderness—that should these Frenchers ever trust themselves again within the range of a ragged bullet, there is one rifle which shall play its part, so long as flint will fire or powder burn. I leave the tomahawk and knife to such as have a natural gift to use them. What say you, Chingachgook," he added in Delaware; "shall the Hurons boast of this to their women when the deep snows come?"

A gleam of resentment flashed across the dark lineaments of the Mohican chief; he loosened his knife in his sheath, and then, turning calmly from the sight, his countenance settled into a repose as deep as if he never knew the instigation of passion.

"Montcalm! Montcalm!" continued the deeply resentful and self-restrained scout; "they say a time must come when all the deeds done in the flesh will be seen at a single look; and that by eyes cleared from

mortal infirmities. Woe betide the wretch who is born to behold this plain, with the judgment hanging about his soul! Ha—as I am a man of white blood, yonder lies a red-skin without the hair of his head where nature rooted it! Look to him, Delaware; it may be one of your missing people; and he should have burial like a stout warrior. I see it in your eye, Sagamore; a Huron pays for this afore the fall winds have blown away the scent of the blood!”

Chingachgook approached the mutilated form, and turning it over, he found the distinguished marks of one of those six allied tribes, or nations, as they were called, who, while they fought in the English ranks, were so deadly hostile to his own people. Spurning the loathsome object with his foot, he turned from it with the same indifference he would have quitted a brute carcass. The scout comprehended the action, and very deliberately pursued his own way, continuing, however, his denunciations against the French commander in the same resentful strain.

“Nothing but vast wisdom and unlimited power should dare to sweep off men in multitudes,” he added; “for it is only the one that can know the necessity of the judgment; and what is there short of the other that can replace the creatures of the Lord? I hold it a sin to kill the second buck afore the first is eaten, unless a march in the front, or an ambushment, be contemplated. It is a different matter with a few warriors in open and rugged fight, for ’tis their gift to die with the rifle or the tomahawk in hand, according as their natures may happen to be white or red. Uncas, come this way, lad, and let the ravens settle upon the Mingo. I know, from often seeing it, that they have a craving for the flesh of an Oneida; and it is as well to let the bird follow the gift of its natural appetite.”

“Hugh!” exclaimed the young Mohican, rising on the extremities of his feet, and gazing intently in his front, frightening the raven to some other prey by the sound and the action.

“What is it, boy?” whispered the scout, lowering his tall form into a crouching at-

titude, like a panther about to take his leap. “God send it be a tardy Frencher, skulking for plunder. I do believe ‘Killdeer’ would take an uncommon range to-day!”

Uncas, without making any reply, bounded away from the spot, and in the next instant he was seen tearing from a bush, and waving in triumph a fragment of the green riding veil of Cora. The movement, the exhibition and the cry, which again burst from the lips of the young Mohican, instantly drew the whole party about him.

“My child!” said Munro, speaking quick and wildly; “give me my child!”

“Uncas will try,” was the short and touching answer.

The simple but meaning assurance was lost on the father, who seized the piece of gauze and crushed it in his hand, while his eyes roamed fearfully among the bushes, as if he equally dreaded and hoped for the secrets they might reveal.”

“Here are no dead,” said Heyward; “the storm seems not to have passed this way.”

“That’s manifest and clearer than the heavens above our heads,” returned the undisturbed scout; “but either she or they that have robbed her have passed the bush; for I remember the rag she wore to hide a face that all did love to look upon. Uncas, you are right; the dark-hair has been here, and she has fled, like a frightened fawn, to the wood; none who could fly would remain to be murdered. Let us search for the marks she left; for to Indian eyes, I sometimes think even a humming-bird leaves his trail in the air.”

The young Mohican darted away at the suggestion, and the scout had hardly done speaking before the former raised a cry of success from the margin of the forest. On reaching the spot the anxious party perceived another portion of the veil fluttering on the lower branch of the beech.

“Softly, softly,” said the scout, extending his long rifle in front of the eager Heyward; “we now know our work, but the beauty of the trail must not be deformed. A step too soon may give us

hours of trouble. We have them, though; that much is beyond denial."

"Bless ye, bless ye, worthy man!" exclaimed Munro; "whither, then, have they fled, and where are my babes?"

"The path they have taken depends on many chances. If they have gone alone they are quite as likely to move in a circle as straight, and they may be within a dozen miles of us; but if the Hurons or any of the French Indians have laid hands on them 'tis probable they are now near the borders of the Canadas. But what matters that?" continued the deliberate scout, observing the powerful anxiety and disappointment the listeners exhibited; "here are the Mohicans and I on one end of the trail, and rely on it, we find the other though they should be a hundred leagues asunder! Gently, gently, Uncas, you are as impatient as a man in the settlements; you forget that light feet leave but faint marks!"

"Hugh!" exclaimed Chingachgook, who had been occupied in examining an opening that had been evidently made through the low underbrush which skirted the forest, and who now stood erect, as he pointed downwards, in the attitude and with the air of a man who beheld a disgusting serpent.

"Here is the palpable impression of the footstep of a man," cried Heyward, bending over the indicated spot; "he has trod in the margin of this pool, and the mark cannot be mistaken. They are captives."

"Better so than left to starve in the wilderness," returned the scout; "and they will leave a wider trail. I would wager fifty beaver skins against as many flints that the Mohicans and I enter their wigwams within the month! Stoop to it, Uncas, and try what you can make of the moccasin; for a moccasin it plainly is, and no shoe."

The young Mohican bent over the track, and removing the scattered leaves from around the place, he examined it with much of that sort of scrutiny that a money-dealer, in these days of pecuniary doubts, would bestow on a suspected duobill. At length he arose from his knees,

satisfied with the result of the examination.

"Well, boy," demanded the attentive scout, "what does it say? Can you make anything of the tell-tale?"

"Le Renard Subtil!"

"Ha! that rampaging devil again! there never will be an end of his loping till 'Killdeer' has said a friendly word to him."

Heyward reluctantly admitted the truth of this intelligence, and now expressed rather his hopes than his doubts by saying—

"One moccasin is so much like another it is probable there is some mistake."

"One moccasin like another! you may as well say that one foot is like another; though we all know that some are long and others short; some broad and others narrow; some with high and some with low insteps; some in-toed and some out. One moccasin is no more like another than one book is like another; though they who can read in one are seldom able to tell the marks of the other. Which is all ordered for the best, giving to every man his natural advantages. Let me get down to it, Uncas; neither book nor moccasin is the worse for having two opinions instead of one." The scout stooped to the task and instantly added, "You are right, boy; here is the patch we saw so often in the other chase. And the fellow will drink when he can get an opportunity; your drinking Indian always learns to walk with a wider toe than the natural savage, it being the gift of a drunkard to straddle, whether of white or red skin. 'Tis just the length and breadth, too! look at it, Sagamore; you measured the prints more than once when we hunted the varments from Glenn's to the health-springs."

Chingachgook complied; and after finishing his short examination, he arose and, with a quiet demeanor, he merely pronounced the word—

"Magua."

"Ay, 'tis a settled thing; here then have passed the dark-hair and Magua."

"And not Alice?" demanded Heyward.

"Of her we have not yet seen the signs," returned the scout, looking closely



Placing Alice then on the same horse with Cora, he seized the bridle,
and commenced his route by plunging deeper into the forest.
—*Last of the Mohicans.*

around at the trees, the bushes, and the ground. "What have we there? Uncas, bring hither the thing you see dangling from yonder thorn-bush."

When the Indian had complied, the scout received the prize, and holding it on high, he laughed in his silent but heartfelt manner.

"'Tis the tooting we'pon of the singer! now we shall have a trail a priest might travel," he said. "Uncas, look for the marks of a shoe that is long enough to uphold six feet two of tottering human flesh. I begin to have some hopes of the fellow, since he has given up squalling to follow some better trade."

"At least he has been faithful to his trust," said Heyward; "and Cora and Alice are not without a friend."

"Yes," said Hawkeye, dropping his rifle and leaning on it with an air of visible contempt, "he will do their singing! Can he slay a buck for their dinner, journey by the moss on the beeches or cut the throat of a Huron? If not, the first cat-bird* he meets is the cleverest of the two. Well, boy, any signs of such a foundation?"

"Here is something like the footstep of one who has worn a shoe; can it be that of our friend?"

"Touch the leaves lightly, or you'll disconcert the formation. That! that is the print of a foot, but 'tis the dark-hair's; and small it is, too, for one of such a noble height and grand appearance. The singer would cover it with his heel."

"Where! Let me look on the footsteps of my child," said Munro, shoving the bushes aside, and bending fondly over the nearly obliterated impression. Though the tread which had left the mark had been light and rapid, it was still plainly visible. The aged soldier examined it with eyes that grew dim as he

gazed; nor did he rise from his stooping posture until Heyward saw that he had watered the trace of his daughter's passage with a scalding tear. Willing to divert a distress which threatened each moment to break through the restraint of appearance, by giving the veteran something to do, the young man said to the scout—

"As we now possess these infallible signs, let us commence our march. A moment, at such a time, will appear an age to the captives."

"It is not the swiftest leaping deer that gives the longest chase," returned Hawkeye, without moving his eyes from the different marks that had come under his view; "we know that the rampaging Huron has passed—and the dark-hair—and the singer—but where is she of the yellow locks and blue eyes? Though little, and far from being as bold as her sister, she is fair to the view and pleasant in discourse. Has she no friend, that none care for her?"

"God forbid she should ever want hundreds! Are we not now in her pursuit? for one, I will never cease the search till she be found."

"In that case we may have to journey by different paths; for here she has not passed, light and little as her footstep would be."

Heyward drew back, all his ardor to proceed seeming to vanish on the instant. Without attending to this sudden change in the other's humor, the scout, after musing a moment, continued—

"There is no woman in this wilderness could leave such a print as that, but the dark-hair or her sister. We know that the first has been here, but where are the signs of the other? Let us push deeper on the trail, and if nothing offers, we must go back to the plain and strike another scent. Move on, Uncas, and keep your eyes on the dried leaves. I will watch the bushes, while your father shall run with a low nose to the ground. Move on, friends; the sun is getting behind the hills."

"Is there nothing that I can do?" demanded the anxious Heyward.

"You!" repeated the scout, who, with his red friends, was already advancing in

* The powers of the American mocking-bird are generally known. But the true mocking-bird is not found so far north as the State of New York, where it has, however, two substitutes of inferior excellence—the cat-bird, so often named by the scout, and the bird vulgarly called ground-thresher. Either of these two last birds is superior to the nightingale or the lark, though, in general, the American birds are less musical than those of Europe.

the order he had prescribed; "yes, you can keep in our rear, and be careful not to cross the trail."

Before they had proceeded many rods, the Indians stopped and appeared to gaze at some signs on the earth with more than their usual keenness. Both father and son spoke quick and loud, now looking at the objects of their mutual admiration, and now regarding each other with the most unequivocal pleasure.

"They have found the little foot!" exclaimed the scout, moving forward, without attending further to his own portion of the duty. "What have we here? An ambushment has been planted in the spot! No, by the truest rifle on the frontier, here have been them one-sided horses again! Now the whole secret is out, and all is plain as the north star at midnight. Yes, here they have mounted. There the beasts have been bound to a sapling, in waiting; and yonder runs the broad path away to the north, in full sweep for the Canadas."

"But still there are no signs of Alice—the of the younger Miss Munro," said Duncan.

"Unless the shining bauble Uncas has just lifted from the ground should prove one. Pass it this way, lad, that we may look at it."

Heyward instantly knew it for a trinket that Alice was fond of wearing, and which he recollected, with the tenacious memory of a lover, to have seen, on the fatal morning of the massacre, dangling from the fair neck of his mistress. He seized the highly prized jewel; and as he proclaimed the fact, it vanished from the eyes of the wondering scout, who in vain looked for it on the ground, long after it was warmly pressed against the beating heart of Duncan.

"Pshaw!" said the disappointed Hawkeye, ceasing to rake the leaves with the breech of his rifle; "'tis a certain sign of age when the sight begins to weaken. Such a glittering gewgaw, and not to be seen! Well, well, I can squint along a clouded barrel yet, and that is enough to settle all disputes between me and the Mingoes. I should like to find the thing, too, if it were only to carry it to the right

owner, and that would be bringing the two ends of what I call a long trail together; for by this time the broad St. Lawrence, or perhaps the Great Lakes themselves, are atwixt us."

"So much the more reason why we should not delay our march," returned Heyward; "let us proceed."

"Young blood and hot blood, they say, are much the same thing. We are not about to start on a squirrel hunt, or to drive a deer into the Horican, but to outlie for days and nights, and to stretch across a wilderness where the feet of men seldom go, and where no bookish knowledge would carry you through harmless. An Indian never starts on such an expedition without smoking over his council fire; and though a man of white blood, I honor their customs in this particular, seeing that they are deliberate and wise. We will, therefore, go back and light our fire to-night in the ruins of the old fort, and in the morning we shall be fresh, and ready to undertake our work like men, and not like babbling women and eager boys."

Heyward saw, by the manner of the scout, that altercation would be useless. Munro had again sunk into that sort of apathy which had beset him since his late overwhelming misfortunes, and from which he was apparently to be roused only by some new and powerful excitement. Making a merit of necessity, the young man took the veteran by the arm, and followed in the footsteps of the Indians and the scout, who had already begun to retrace the path which conducted them to the plain.

CHAPTER XIX.

Salat. Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh? What's that good for?

Shy. To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge.

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE shades of evening had come to increase the dreariness of the place when the party entered the ruins of William

Henry. The scout and his companions immediately made their preparations to pass the night there; but with an earnestness and sobriety of demeanor that betrayed how much the unusual horrors they had just witnessed worked on even their practiced feelings. A few fragments of rafters were reared against a blackened wall; and when Uncas had covered them slightly with brush the temporary accommodations were deemed sufficient. The young Indian pointed towards his rude hut when his labor was ended; Heyward, who understood the meaning of the silent gesture, gently urged Munro to enter. Leaving the bereaved old man alone with his sorrows Duncan immediately returned into the open air, too much excited himself to seek the repose he had recommended to his veteran friend.

While Hawkeye and the Indians lighted their fire and took their evening's repast, a frugal meal of dried bear's meat, the young man paid a visit to that curtain of the dilapidated fort which looked out on the sheet of the Horican. The wind had fallen, and the waves were already rolling on the sandy beach beneath him in a more regular and tempered succession. The clouds, as if tired of their furious chase, were breaking asunder; the heavier volumes, gathering in black masses about the horizon, while the lighter scud still hurried above the water or eddied among the tops of the mountains like broken flights of birds hovering around their roosts. Here and there a red and fiery star struggled through the drifting vapor, furnishing a lurid gleam of brightness to the dull aspect of the heavens. Within the bosom of the encircling hills an impenetrable darkness had already settled, and the plain lay like a vast and deserted charnel-house, without omen or whisper to disturb the slumbers of its numerous and hapless tenants.

Of this scene, so chillingly in accordance with the past, Duncan stood for many minutes a rapt observer. His eyes wandered from the bosom of the mound, where the foresters were seated around their glimmering fire, to the fainter light which still lingered in the skies, and then rested long

and anxiously on the embodied gloom, which lay like a dreary void on that side of him where the dead reposed. He soon fancied that inexplicable sounds arose from the place, though so indistinct and stolen, as to render not only their nature but even their existence uncertain. Ashamed of his apprehensions the young man turned towards the water, and strove to divert his attention to the mimic stars that dimly glimmered on its moving surface. Still, his too conscious ears performed their ungrateful duty, as if to warn him of some lurking danger. At length a swift trampling seemed, quite audibly, to rush athwart the darkness. Unable any longer to quiet his uneasiness, Duncan spoke in a low voice to the scout, requesting him to ascend the mound to the place where he stood. Hawkeye threw his rifle across an arm and complied, but with an air so unmoved and calm as to prove how much he counted on the security of their position.

"Listen," said Duncan, when the other placed himself deliberately at his elbow; "there are suppressed noises on the plain which may show that Montcalm has not yet entirely deserted his conquest."

"Then ears are better than eyes," said the undisturbed scout, who, having just deposited a portion of a bear between his grinders, spoke thick and slow, like one whose mouth was doubly occupied. "I, myself, saw him caged in Ty, with all his host; for your Frenchers, when they have done a clever thing, like to get back and have a dance or a merry-making with the women over their success."

"I know not. An Indian seldom sleeps in war, and plunder may keep a Huron here after his tribe has departed. It would be well to extinguish the fire and have a watch. Listen! you hear the noise I mean!"

"An Indian more rarely lurks about the graves. Though ready to slay, and not over regardful of the means, he is commonly content with the scalp, unless when blood is hot and temper up; but after the spirit is once fairly gone, he forgets his enmity and is willing to let the dead find their natural rest. Speaking of spirits, major, are you of opinion that the heaven

of a red-skin and of us whites will be one and the same?"

"No doubt—no doubt. I thought I heard it again! or was it the rustling of the leaves in the top of the beech?"

"For my own part," continued Hawkeye, turning his face for a moment in the direction indicated by Heyward, but with a vacant and careless manner, "I believe that paradise is ordained for happiness; and that men will be indulged in it according to their dispositions and gifts. I therefore judge that a red-skin is not far from the truth when he believes he is to find them glorious hunting-grounds of which his traditions tell; nor, for that matter, do I think it would be any disparagement to a man without a cross to pass his time——"

"You hear it again?" interrupted Duncan.

"Ay, ay, when food is scarce and when food is plenty a wolf grows bold," said the unmoved scout. "There would be picking, too, among the skins of the devils if there was light and time for the sport. But, concerning the life that is to come, major: I have heard preachers say in the settlements that Heaven was a place of rest. Now, men's minds differ as to their ideas of enjoyment. For myself, and I say with reverence to the ordering of Providence, it would be no great indulgence to be kept shut up in those mansions of which they preach, having a natural longing for motion and the chase."

Duncan, who was now made to understand the nature of the noises he had heard, answered, with more attention to the subject which the humor of the scout had chosen for discussion, by saying—

"It is difficult to account for the feelings that may attend the last great change."

"It would be a change indeed for a man who has passed his days in the open air," returned the single-minded scout; "and who has so often broken his fast on the head waters of the Hudson, to sleep within sound of the roaring Mohawk. But it is a comfort to know we serve a merciful master, though we do it each after his fashion, and with great tracts

of wilderness between us—What goes there?"

"Is it not the rushing of the wolves you have mentioned?"

Hawkeye slowly shook his head and beckoned for Duncan to follow him to a spot to which the glare from the fire did not extend. When he had taken this precaution, the scout placed himself in an attitude of intense attention, and listened long and keenly for a repetition of the low sound that had so unexpectedly startled him. His vigilance, however, seemed exercised in vain; for, after a fruitless pause, he whispered to Duncan—

"We must give a call to Uncas. The boy has Indian senses, and may hear what is hid from us; for, being a white-skin, I will not deny my nature."

The young Mohican, who was conversing in a low voice with his father, started as he heard the moaning of an owl, and, springing on his feet, he looked towards the black mounds, as if seeking the place whence the sounds proceeded. The scout repeated the call, and in a few moments Duncan saw the figure of Uncas stealing cautiously along the rampart to the spot where they stood.

Hawkeye explained his wishes in a very few words, which were spoken in the Delaware tongue. So soon as Uncas was in possession of the reason why he was summoned he threw himself flat on the turf, where, to the eyes of Duncan, he appeared to lie quiet and motionless. Surprised at the immovable attitude of the young warrior, and curious to observe the manner in which he employed his faculties to obtain the desired information, Heyward advanced a few steps and bent over the dark object, on which he had kept his eyes riveted. Then it was that he discovered that the form of Uncas had vanished and that he beheld only the dark outline of an inequality in the embankment.

"What has become of the Mohican?" he demanded of the scout, stepping back in amazement; "it was here that I saw him fall, and I could have sworn that here he yet remained."

"Hist! speak lower; for we know not what ears are open, and the Mingoes are

a quick-witted breed. As for Uncas, he is out on the plain, and the Maquas, if any such are about us, will find their equal."

"You think that Montcalm has not called off all his Indians? Let us give the alarm to our companions, that we may stand to our arms. Here are five of us, who are not unused to meet an enemy."

"Not a word to either, as you value your life. Look at the Sagamore, how like a grand Indian chief he sits by the fire. If there are any skulkers out in the darkness they will never discover by his countenance that we suspect danger at hand."

"But they may discover him, and it will prove his death. His person can be too plainly seen by the light of that fire, and he will become the first and most certain victim."

"It is undeniable that now you speak the truth," returned the scout, betraying more anxiety than usual; "yet what can be done? A single suspicious look might bring on an attack before we are ready to receive it. He knows, by the call I gave to Uncas, that we have struck a scent: I will tell him that we are on the trail of the Mingoes; his Indian nature will teach him how to act."

The scout applied his fingers to his mouth, and raised a low hissing sound, that caused Duncan, at first, to start aside, believing that he heard a serpent. The head of Chingachgook was resting on a hand, as he sat musing by himself; but the moment he heard the warning of the animal whose name he bore it rose to an upright position, and his dark eyes glanced swiftly and keenly on every side of him. With this sudden and perhaps involuntary movement, every appearance of surprise or alarm ended. His rifle lay untouched, and apparently unnoticed, within reach of his hand. The tomahawk that he had loosened in his belt for the sake of ease was even suffered to fall from its usual situation to the ground, and his form seemed to sink, like that of a man whose nerves and sinews were suffered to relax for the purpose of rest. Cunningly resuming his former position, though with a change of hands, as if the movement had

been made merely to relieve the limb, the native awaited the result with a calmness and fortitude that none but an Indian warrior would have known how to exercise.

But Heyward saw that while to a less instructed eye the Mohican chief appeared to slumber his nostrils were expanded, his head was turned a little to one side, as if to assist the organs of hearing, and that his quick and rapid glances ran incessantly over every object within the power of his vision.

"See the noble fellow!" whispered Hawkeye, pressing the arm of Heyward; "he knows that a look or a motion might disconcert our schemes, and put us at the mercy of them imps—"

He was interrupted by the flash and report of a rifle. The air was filled with sparks of fire around that spot where the eyes of Heyward were still fastened with admiration and wonder. A second look told him that Chingachgook had disappeared in the confusion. In the meantime, the scout had thrown forward his rifle, like one prepared for service, and awaited impatiently the moment when an enemy might rise to view. But with the solitary and fruitless attempt made on the life of Chingachgook, the attack appeared to have terminated. Once or twice the listeners thought they could distinguish the distant rustling of bushes, as bodies of some unknown description rushed through them; nor was it long before Hawkeye pointed out the "scampering of the wolves," as they fled precipitately before the passage of some intruder on their proper domains. After an impatient and breathless pause, a plunge was heard in the water, and it was immediately followed by the report of another rifle.

"There goes Uncas!" said the scout; "the boy bears a smart piece! I know its crack, as well as a father knows the language of his child, for I carried the gun myself until a better offered."

"What can this mean?" demanded Duncan; "we are watched, and, as it would seem, marked for destruction."

"Yonder scattered brand can witness that no good was intended, and this in-

dian will testify that no harm has been done," returned the scout, dropping his rifle across his arm again, and following Chingachgook, who just then re-appeared within the circle of light, into the bosom of the works. "How is it, Sagamore? Are the Mingoes upon us in earnest, or is it only one of those reptiles who hang upon the skirts of a war party, to scalp the dead, go in, and make their boasts among the squaws of the valiant deeds done on the pale-faces?"

Chingachgook very quietly resumed his seat; nor did he make any reply, until after he had examined the firebrand which had been struck by the bullet that had nearly proved fatal to himself. After which, he was content to reply, holding a single finger up to view, with the English monosyllable—

"One."

"I thought as much," returned Hawk-eye, seating himself; "and as he had got the cover of the lake afore Uncas pulled upon him, it is more than probable the knave will sing his lies about some great ambushment, in which he was outlying on the trail of two Mohicans and a white hunter—for the officers can be considered as little better than idlers in such a scrimmage. Well, let him—let him. There are always some honest men in every nation, though heavens knows, too, that they are scarce among the Maquas, to look down an upstart when he brags ag'in the face of reason. The varlet sent his lead within whistle of your ears, Sagamore."

Chingachgook turned a calm and incurious eye toward the place where the ball had struck, and then resumed his former attitude, with a composure that could not be disturbed by so trifling an incident. Just then Uncas glided into the circle, and seated himself at the fire, with the same appearance of indifference as was maintained by his father.

Of these several movements Heyward was a deeply interested and wondering observer. It appeared to him as though the foresters had some secret means of intelligence which had escaped the vigilance of his own faculties. In place of that eager and garulous narration with which

a white youth would have endeavored to communicate, and perhaps exaggerate, that which had passed out in the darkness of the plain, the young warrior was seemingly content to let his deeds speak for themselves. It was, in fact, neither the moment nor the occasion for the Indian to boast of his exploits; and it is probable, that had Heyward neglected to inquire, not another syllable would, just then, have been uttered on the subject.

"What has become of our enemy, Uncas?" demanded Duncan; "we heard your rifle, and hoped you had not fired in vain."

The young chief removed a fold of his hunting shirt, and quietly exposed the fatal tuft of hair, which he bore as the symbol of victory. Chingachgook had his hand on the scalp, and considered it for a moment with deep attention. Then dropping it, with disgust depicted in his strong features, he ejaculated—

"Oneida!"

"Oneida!" repeated the scout, who was fast losing his interest in the scene in an apathy nearly assimilated to that of his red associates, but who now advanced with uncommon earnestness to regard the bloody badge. "By the lord, if the Oneidas are outlying upon the trail, we shall be flanked by devils on every side of us! Now, to white eyes there is no difference between this bit of skin and that of any other Indian, and yet the Sagamore declares it came from the poll of a Mingo; nay, he even names the tribe of the poor devil with as much ease as if the scalp was a leaf of a book, and each hair a letter. What right have Christian whites to boast of their learning, when a savage can read a language that would prove too much for the wisest of them all! What say *you*, lad; of what people was the knave?"

Uncas raised his eyes to the face of the scout and answered, in his soft voice—

"Oneida."

"Oneida again! When one Indian makes a declaration it is commonly true; but when he is supported by his people, set it down as gospel!"

"The poor fellow has mistaken us for

French," said Heyward; "or he would not have attempted the life of a friend."

"He mistake a Mohican in his paint for a Huron! You would be as likely to mistake the white-coated grenadiers of Montcalm for the scarlet jackets of the 'Royal Americans,'" returned the scout. "No, no, the serpent knew his errand; nor was there any great mistake in the matter, for there is but little love atween a Delaware and a Mingo, let their tribes go out to fight for whom they may in a white quarrel. For that matter, though the Oneidas do serve his sacred majesty, who is my own sovereign lord and master, I should not have deliberated long about letting off 'Kill-deer' at the imp myself, had luck thrown him in my way."

"That would have been an abuse of our treaties and unworthy of your character."

"When a man consorts much with a people," continued Hawkeye, "if they are honest and he no knave, love will grow up atwixt them. It is true that white cunning has managed to throw the tribes into great confusion, as respects friends and enemies, so that the Hurons and the Oneidas, who speak the same tongue, or what may be called the same, take each other's scalps, and the Delawares are divided among themselves; a few hanging about their great council fire on their own river, and fighting on the same side with the Mingoes, while the greater part are in the Canadas, out of natural enmity to the Maquas, thus throwing everything into disorder and destroying all the harmony of warfare. Yet a red natur' is not likely to alter with every shift of policy; so that the love atwixt a Mohican and a Mingo is much like the regard between a white man and a serpent."

"I regret to hear it, for I had believed those natives who dwelt within our boundaries had found us too just and liberal not to identify themselves fully with our quarrels."

"Why, I believe it is natur' to give a preference to one's own quarrels before those of strangers. Now, for myself, I do love justice; and therefore I will not say I hate a Mingo—for that may be unsuitable to my color and my religion—

though I will just repeat, it may have been owing to the night that 'Kill-deer' had no hand in the death of this skulking Oneida."

Then, as if satisfied with the force of his own reasons, whatever might be their effect on the opinions of the other disputant, the honest but implacable woodsman turned from the fire, content to let the controversy slumber. Heyward withdrew to the rampart, too uneasy and too little accustomed to the warfare of the woods to remain at ease under the possibility of such insidious attacks. Not so, however, with the scout and the Mohicans. Those acute and long practiced senses, whose powers so often exceed the limits of all ordinary credulity, after having detected the danger, had enabled them to ascertain its magnitude and duration. Not one of the three appeared in the least to doubt their perfect security, as was indicated by the preparations that were soon made to sit in council over their future proceedings.

The confusion of nations, and even of tribes, to which Hawkeye alluded, existed at that period in the fullest force. The great tie of language, and, of course, of a common origin, was severed in many places; and it was one of its consequences that the Delaware and the Mingo (as the people of the Six Nations were called) were found fighting in the same ranks, while the latter sought the scalp of the Huron, though believed to be the root of his own stock. The Delawares were even divided among themselves. Though love for the soil which had belonged to his ancestors kept the Sagamore of the Mohicans with a small band of followers who were serving at Edward, under the banners of the English king, by far the largest portion of his nation were known to be in the field as allies of Montcalm. The reader probably knows, if enough has not already been gleaned from this narrative, that the Delaware, or Lenape, claimed to be the progenitors of that numerous people who once were masters of most of the eastern and northern States of America, of whom the community of the Mohicans was an ancient and highly honored member.

It was, of course, with a perfect understanding of the minute and intricate interests which had armed friend against friend, and brought natural enemies to combat by each other's side, that the scout and his companions now disposed themselves to deliberate on the measures that were to govern their future movements, amid so many jarring and savage races of men. Duncan knew enough of Indian customs to understand the reason that the fire was replenished, and why the warriors, not excepting Hawkeye, took their seats within the curl of its smoke with so much gravity and decorum. Placing himself at an angle of the works, where he might be spectator of the scene within, while he kept a watchful eye against any danger from without, he awaited the result with as much patience as he could summon.

After a short and impressive pause, Chingachgook lighted a pipe whose bowl was curiously carved in one of the soft stones of the country, and whose stem was a tube of wood, and commenced smoking. When he had inhaled enough of the fragrance of the soothing weed, he passed the instrument into the hands of the scout. In this manner the pipe had made its rounds three several times, amid the most profound silence, before either of the party opened his lips. Then the Sagamore, as the oldest and highest in rank, in a few calm and dignified words, proposed the subject for deliberation. He was answered by the scout; and Chingachgook rejoined, when the other objected to his opinions. But the youthful Uncas continued a silent and respectful listener, until Hawkeye, in complaisance, demanded his opinion. Heyward gathered from the manners of the different speakers that the father and son espoused one side of a disputed question, while the white man maintained the other. The contest gradually grew warmer, until it was quite evident the feelings of the speakers began to be somewhat enlisted in the debate.

Notwithstanding the increasing warmth of the amicable contest, the most decorous Christian assembly, not even excepting those in which its reverend ministers

are collected, might have learned a wholesome lesson of moderation from the forbearance and courtesy of the disputants. The words of Uncas were received with the same deep attention as those which fell from the maturer wisdom of his father; and so far from manifesting any impatience, neither spoke in reply, until a few moments of silent meditation were, seemingly, bestowed in deliberating on what had already been said.

The language of the Mohicans was accompanied by gestures so direct and natural, that Heyward had but little difficulty in following the thread of their argument. On the other hand, the scout was obscure; because, from the lingering pride of color, he rather affected the cold and artificial manner which characterizes all classes of Anglo-Americans when unexcited. By the frequency with which the Indians described the marks of a forest trail, it was evident they urged a pursuit by land, while the repeated sweep of Hawkeye's arm towards the Horian denoted that he was for a passage across its waters.

The latter was, to every appearance, fast losing ground, and the point was about to be decided against him, when he arose to his feet, and shaking off his apathy, he suddenly assumed the manner of an Indian, and adopted all the arts of native eloquence. Elevating an arm, he pointed out the track of the sun, repeating the gesture for every day that was necessary to accomplish their object. Then he delineated a long and painful path, amid rocks and watercourses. The age and weakness of the slumbering and unconscious Munro were indicated by signs too palpable to be mistaken. Duncan perceived that even his own powers were spoken lightly of, as the scout extended his palm, and mentioned him by the appellation of the "Open Hand"—a name his liberality had purchased of all the friendly tribes. Then came a representation of the light and graceful movements of a canoe, set in forcible contrast to the tottering steps of one enfeebled and tired. He concluded by pointing to the scalp of the Oneida, and apparently urged the necessity of their departing speedily,

and in a manner that should leave no trail.

The Mohicans listened gravely, and with countenances that reflected the sentiments of the speaker. Conviction gradually wrought its influence, and towards the close of Hawkeye's speech his sentences were accompanied by the customary exclamation of commendation. In short, Uncas and his father became converts to his way of thinking, abandoning their own previously expressed opinions with a liberality and candor that, had they been the representatives of some great and civilized people, would have infallibly worked their political ruin by destroying, forever, their reputation for consistency.

The instant the matter in discussion was decided, the debate, and everything connected with it, except the result, appeared to be forgotten. Hawkeye, without looking round to read his triumph in applauding eyes, very composedly stretched his tall frame before the dying embers, and closed his own organs in sleep.

Left now in a measure to themselves, the Mohicans, whose time had been so much devoted to the interests of others, seized the moment to devote some attention to themselves. Casting off, at once, the grave and austere demeanor of an Indian chief, Chingachgook commenced speaking to his son in the soft and playful tones of affection. Uncas gladly met the familiar air of his father, and before the hard breathing of the scout announced that he slept, a complete change was effected in the manner of his two associates.

It is impossible to describe the music of their language, while thus engaged in laughter and endearments, in such a way as to render it intelligible to those whose ears have never listened to its melody. The compass of their voices, particularly that of the youth, was wonderful, extending from the deepest bass to tones that were even feminine in softness. The eyes of the father followed the plastic and ingenious movements of the son with open delight, and he never failed to smile in

reply to the other's contagious but low laughter. While under the influence of these gentle and natural feelings, no trace of ferocity was to be seen in the softened features of the Sagamore. His figured panoply of death looked more like a disguise assumed in mockery than a fierce annunciation of a desire to carry destruction and desolation in his footsteps.

After an hour passed in the indulgence of their better feelings, Chingachgook abruptly announced his desire to sleep by wrapping his head in his blanket and stretching his form on the naked earth. The merriment of Uncas instantly ceased; and carefully raking the coals in such a manner that they should impart their warmth to his father's feet, the youth sought his own pillow among the ruins of the place.

Imbibing renewed confidence from the security of these experienced foresters, Heyward soon imitated their example; and long before the night had turned, they who lay in the bosom of the ruined work seemed to slumber as heavily as the unconscious multitude whose bones were already beginning to bleach on the surrounding plain.

CHAPTER XX.

Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
—CHILDE HAROLD.

THE heavens were still studded with stars, when Hawkeye came to rouse the sleepers. Casting aside their cloaks, Munro and Heyward were on their feet, while the woodsman was still making his low calls, at the entrance of the rude shelter where they had passed the night. When they issued from beneath its concealment, they found the scout awaiting their appearance nigh by, and the only salutation between them was the significant gesture for silence made by their sagacious leader.

"Think over your prayers," he whispered, as they approached him; "for he, to whom you make them, knows all tongues; that of the heart, as well as

those of the mouth. But speak not a syllable; it is rare for a white voice to pitch itself properly in the woods, as we have seen by the example of that miserable devil, the singer. Come," he continued, turning towards a curtain of the works; "let us get into the ditch on this side, and be careful to step on the stones and fragments of wood as you go."

His companions complied, though to two of them the reasons of this extraordinary precaution were yet a mystery. When they were in the low cavity that surrounded the earthen fort on three of its sides, they found the passage nearly choked by the ruins. With care and patience, however, they succeeded in clambering after the scout, until they reached the sandy shore of the Horican.

"That's a trail that nothing but a nose can follow," said the satisfied scout looking back along their difficult way; "grass is a treacherous carpet for a flying party to tread on, but wood and stone take no print from a moccasin. Had you worn your armed boots, there might, indeed, have been something to fear; but with the deer-skin suitably prepared, a man may trust himself, generally, on rocks with safety. Shove in the canoe nigher to the land, Uncas; this sand will take a stamp as easily as the butter of the Jarmans on the Mohawk. Softly, lad, softly, it must not touch the beach, or the knaves will know by what road we have left the place."

The young man observed the precaution; and the scout, laying a board from the ruins to the canoe, made a sign for the two officers to enter. When this was done, everything was studiously restored to its former disorder; and then Hawkeye succeeded in reaching his little birchen vessel, without leaving behind him any of those marks which he appeared so much to dread. Heyward was silent, until the Indians had cautiously paddled the canoe some distance from the fort, and within the broad and dark shadow that fell from the eastern mountain, on the glassy surface of the lake; then he demanded—

"What need have we for this stolen and hurried departure?"

"If the blood of an Oneida could stain such a sheet of pure water as this we float on," returned the scout, "your two eyes would answer your own question. Have you forgotten the skulking reptile that Uncas slew?"

"By no means. But he was said to be alone, and dead men give no cause for fear."

"Ay, he was alone in his deviltry! but an Indian, whose tribe counts so many warriors, need seldom fear his blood will run without the death shriek coming speedily from some of his enemies."

"But our presence—the authority of Colonel Munro—would prove a sufficient protection against the anger of our allies, especially in a case where the wretch so well merited his fate. I trust in heaven you have not deviated a single foot from the direct line of our course, with so slight a reason."

"Do you think the bullet of that varlet's rifle would have turned aside, though his sacred majesty the king had stood in its path?" returned the stubborn scout. "Why did not the grand Frenchman, who is captain-general of the Canadas, bury the tomahawks of the Hurons, if a word from a white man can work so strongly on the nature of an Indian?"

The reply of Heyward was interrupted by a groan from Munro; but after he had paused a moment, in deference to the sorrow of his aged friend, he resumed the subject.

"The Marquis of Montcalm can only settle that error with his God," said the young man solemnly.

"Ay, ay, now there is reason in your words, for they are bottomed on religion and honesty. There is a vast difference between throwing a regiment of white coats atwixt the tribes and the prisoners and coaxing an angry savage to forget he carries a knife and a rifle, with words that must begin with calling him 'your son.' No, no," continued the scout, looking back at the dim shore of William Henry, which was now fast receding, and laughing in his own silent but heartfelt manner; "I have put a trail of water atween us, and unless the imps can make friends

with the fishes, and hear who has paddled across their basin this fine morning, we shall throw the length of the Mohican behind us before they have made up their mind which path to take."

"With foes in front, and foes in our rear, our journey is like to be one of danger."

"Danger!" repeated Hawkeye calmly; "no, not absolutely of danger; for, with vigilant ears and quick eyes we can manage to keep a few hours ahead of the knaves; or, if we must try the rifle, there are three of us who understand its gifts as well as any you can name on the borders. No, not of danger; but that we shall have what you may call a brisk push of it is probable; and it may happen a brush, a skirmish or some such diversion, but always where covers are good and ammunition abundant."

It is possible that Heyward's estimate of danger differed in some degree from that of the scout, for, instead of replying, he sat in silence while the canoe glided over several miles of water. Just as the day dawned they entered the narrows of the lake* and stole swiftly and cautiously among their numberless little islands. It was by this road that Montcalm had retired with his army, and the adventurers knew not but he had left some of his Indians in ambush to protect the rear of his forces and collect the stragglers. They

therefore approached the passage with the customary silence of their guarded habits.

Chingachgook laid aside his paddle, while Uncas and the scout urged the light vessel through crooked and intricate channels, where every foot that they advanced exposed them to the danger of some sudden rising on their progress. The eyes of the Sagamore moved warily from islet to islet and copse to copse, as the canoe proceeded; and when a clearer sheet of water permitted, his keen vision was bent along the bold rocks and impending forests that frowned upon the narrow strait.

Heyward, who was a doubly interested spectator, as well from the beauties of the place as from the apprehension natural to his situation, was just believing that he had permitted the latter to be excited without sufficient reason, when the paddle ceased moving, in obedience to a signal from Chingachgook.

"Hugh!" exclaimed Uncas, nearly at the moment that the light tap his father had made on the side of the canoe notified them of the vicinity of danger.

"What now?" asked the scout; "the lake is as smooth as if the winds had never blown, and I can see along its sheet for miles; there is not so much as the black head of a loon dotting the water."

The Indian gravely raised his paddle, and pointed in the direction in which his own steady look was riveted. Duncan's eyes followed the motion. A few rods in their front lay another of the low wooded islets, but it appeared as calm and peaceful as if its solitude had never been disturbed by the foot of man.

"I see nothing," he said. "but land and water: and a lovely scene it is."

"Hist!" interrupted the scout. "Ay, Sagamore, there is always a reason for what you do. 'Tis but a shade, and yet it is not natural. You see the mist, Major, that is rising above the island; you can't call it a fog, for it is more like a streak of thin cloud ——"

"It is vapor from the water."

"That a child could tell. But what is the edging of blacker smoke that hangs

* The beauties of Lake George are well known to every American tourist. In the height of the mountains which surround it and in artificial accessories it is inferior to the finest of the Swiss and Italian lakes, while in outline and purity of water it is fully their equal, and in the number and disposition of its isles and islets much superior to them altogether. There are said to be some hundreds of islands in a sheet of water less than thirty miles long. The narrows which connect what may be called in truth two lakes are crowded with islands to such a degree as to leave passages between them, frequently, of only a few feet in width. The lake itself varies in breadth from one to three miles.

The State of New York is remarkable for the number and beauty of its lakes. One of its frontiers lies on the vast sheet of Ontario, while Champlain stretches nearly a hundred miles along another. Oneida, Cayuga, Canandaigua, Seneca and George are all lakes of thirty miles in length, while those of a size smaller are without number. On most of these lakes there are now beautiful villages, and on many of them steamboats.

along its lower side, and which you may trace down into the thicket of hazel? 'Tis from a fire; but one that, in my judgment, has been suffered to burn low."

"Let us then push for the place, and relieve our doubts," said the impatient Duncan; "the party must be small that can lie on such a bit of land."

"If you judge of Indian cunning by the rules you find in books, or by white sagacity, they will lead you astray, if not to your death," returned Hawkeye, examining the signs of the place with that acuteness which distinguished him. "If I may be permitted to speak in this matter, it will be to say that we have but two things to choose between: the one is, to return, and give up all thoughts of following the Huron——"

"Never!" exclaimed Heyward, in a voice far too loud for their circumstances.

"Well, well," continued Hawkeye, making a hasty sign to repress his impatience; "I am much of your mind myself; though I thought it becoming my experience to tell the whole. We must then make a push, and if the Indians or Frenchers are in the narrows, run the gauntlet through these toppling mountains. Is there reason in my words, Sagamore?"

The Indian made no other answer than by dropping his paddle into the water, and urging forward his canoe. As he held the office of directing its course, his resolution was sufficiently indicated by the movement. The whole party now plied their paddles vigorously, and in a very few moments they had reached a point whence they might command an entire view of the northern shore of the island, the side that had hitherto been concealed.

"There they are, by all the truth of signs," whispered the scout; "two canoes and a smoke. The knaves haven't yet got their eyes out of the mist, or we should hear the accursed whoop. Together, friends—we are leaving them, and are already nearly out of whistle of a bullet."

The well-known crack of a rifle, whose ball came skipping along the placid surface of the strait, and a shrill yell from the island, interrupted his speech and

announced that their passage was discovered. In another instant several savages were seen rushing into the canoes, which were soon dancing over the water in pursuit. These fearful precursors of a coming struggle produced no change in the countenances and movements of his three guides, so far as Duncan could discover, except that the strokes of their paddles were longer and more in unison, and caused the little bark to spring forward like a creature possessing life and volition.

"Hold them there, Sagamore," said Hawkeye, looking coolly backward over his left shoulder, while he still plied his paddle; "keep them just there. Them Hurons have never a piece in their nation that will execute at this distance; but 'Kill-deer' has a barrel on which a man may calculate."

The scout having ascertained that the Hurons were sufficient of themselves to maintain the requisite distance, deliberately laid aside his paddle and raised the fatal rifle. Three several times he brought the piece to his shoulder, and when his companions were expecting its report he as often lowered it to request the Indians would permit their enemies to approach a little nigher. At length his accurate and fastidious eye seemed satisfied, and throwing out his left arm on the barrel, he was slowly elevating the muzzle, when an exclamation from Uncas, who sat in the bow, once more caused him to suspend the shot.

"What now, lad!" demanded Hawkeye; "you saved a Huron from the death-shriek by that word; have you reason for what you do?"

Uncas pointed towards the rocky shore a little in their front, whence another war canoe was darting directly across their course. It was too obvious now that their situation was imminently perilous to need the aid of language to confirm it. The scout laid aside his rifle, and resumed the paddle, while Chingachgook inclined the bows of the canoe a little towards the western shore, in order to increase the distance between them and this new enemy. In the meantime they were reminded of the presence of those who pressed upon

their rear by wild and exulting shouts. The stirring scene awakened even Munro from his apathy.

"Let us make for the rocks on the main," he said, with the mien of a tired soldier, "and give battle to the savages. God forbid that I, or those attached to me and mine, should ever trust again to the faith of any servant of the Louises."

"He who wishes to prosper in Indian warfare," returned the scout, "must not be too proud to learn from the wit of a native. Lay her more along the land, Sagamore; we are doubling on the varlets, and perhaps they may try to strike our trail on the long calculation."

Hawkeye was not mistaken, for when the Hurons found their course was likely to throw them behind their chase, they rendered it less direct until, by gradually bearing more and more obliquely, the two canoes were, ere long, gliding on parallel lines, within two hundred yards of each other. It now became entirely a trial of speed. So rapid was the progress of the light vessels, that the lake curled in their front, in miniature waves, and their motion became undulating by its own velocity. It was, perhaps, owing to this circumstance, in addition to the necessity of keeping every hand employed at the paddles, that the Hurons had not immediate recourse to their fire-arms. The exertions of the fugitives were too severe to continue long, and the pursuers had the advantage of numbers. Duncan observed, with uneasiness, that the scout began to look anxiously about him, as if searching for some further means of assisting their flight.

"Edge her a little more from the sun, Sagamore," said the stubborn woodsman; "I see the knaves are sparing a man to the rifle. A single broken bone might lose us our scalps. Edge more from the sun and we will put the island between us."

The expedient was not without its use. A long, low island lay at a little distance before them, and as they closed with it, the chasing canoe was compelled to take a side opposite to that on which the pursued passed. The scout and his companions did not neglect this advantage, but

the instant they were hid from observation by the bushes, they redoubled efforts that had before seemed prodigious. The two canoes came round the last low point, like two coursers at the top of their speed, the fugitives taking the lead. This change had brought them nigher to each other, however, while it altered their relative positions.

"You showed knowledge in the shaping of birchen bark, Uncas, when you chose this from among the Huron canoes," said the scout, smiling, apparently more in satisfaction at their superiority in the race than from that prospect of final escape which now began to open a little upon them. "The imps have put all their strength again at the paddles, and we are to struggle for our scalps with bits of flattened wood instead of clouded barrels and true eyes. A long stroke, and together, friends."

"They are preparing for a shot," said Heyward; "and as we are in a line with them it can scarcely fail."

"Get you then into the bottom of the canoe," returned the scout; "you and the colonel; it will be so much taken from the size of the mark."

Heyward smiled, as he answered—

"It would be but an ill example for the highest in rank to dodge while the warriors were under fire."

"Lord! Lord! that is now a white man's courage!" exclaimed the scout; "and like too many of his notions, not to be maintained by reason. Do you think the Sagamore, or Uncas, or even I, who am a man without a cross, would deliberate about finding a cover in the scrimmage when an open body would do good? For what have the Frenchers reared up their Quebec, if fighting is always to be done in the clearings?"

"All that you say is very true, my friend," replied Heyward; "still, our customs must prevent us from doing as you wish."

A volley from the Hurons interrupted the discourse, and as the bullets whistled about them, Duncan saw the head of Uncas turned, looking back at himself and Munro. Notwithstanding the nearness of

the enemy, and his own great personal danger, the countenance of the young warrior expressed no other emotion, as the former was compelled to think, than amazement at finding men willing to encounter so useless an exposure. Chingachgook was probably better acquainted with the notions of white men, for he did not even cast a glance aside from the riveted look his eye maintained on the object by which he governed their course. A ball soon struck the light and polished paddle from the hands of the chief, and drove it through the air, far in the advance. A shout arose from the Hurons, who seized the opportunity to fire another volley. Uncas described an arc in the water with his own blade, and as the canoe passed swiftly on, Chingachgook recovered his paddle, and flourishing it on high, he gave the warwhoop of the Mohicans, and then lent his strength and skill again to the important task.

The clamorous sounds of "*Le gros Serpent!*" "*La longue Carabine!*" "*Le Cerf agile!*" burst at once from the canoes behind, and seemed to give new zeal to the pursuers. The scout seized "*Kill-deer*" in his left hand, and elevating it above his head, he shook it in triumph at his enemies. The savages answered the insult with a yell, and immediately another volley succeeded. The bullets pattered along the lake, and one even pierced the bark of their little vessel. No perceptible emotion could be discovered in the Mohicans during this critical moment, their rigid features expressing neither hope nor alarm; but the scout again turned his head, and laughing in his own silent manner, he said to Heyward—

"The knaves love to hear the sound of their pieces; but the eye is not to be found among the Mingoos that can calculate a true range in a dancing canoe! You see the dumb devils have taken off a man to charge, and by the smallest measurement that can be allowed, we move three feet to their two!"

Duncan, who was not altogether as easy under this nice estimate of distance as his companions, was glad to find, how-

ever, that owing to their superior dexterity and the diversion among their enemies, they were very sensibly obtaining the advantage. The Hurons soon fired again, and a bullet struck the blade of Hawkeye's paddle without injury.

"That will do," said the scout, examining the slight indentation with a curious eye; "it would not have cut the skin of an infant, much less of men who, like us, have been blown upon by the heavens in their anger. Now, Major, if you will try to use this piece of flattened wood, I'll let '*Kill-deer*' take a part in the conversation."

Heyward seized the paddle, and applied himself to the work with an eagerness that supplied the place of skill, while Hawkeye was engaged in inspecting the priming of his rifle. The latter then took a swift aim, and fired. The Huron in the bows of the leading canoe had risen with a similar object, and he now fell backward, suffering his gun to escape from his hands into the water. In an instant, however, he recovered his feet, though his gestures were wild and bewildered. At the same moment his companions suspended their efforts, and the chasing canoes clustered together, and became stationary. Chingachgook and Uncas profited by the interval to regain their wind, though Duncan continued to work with the most persevering industry. The father and son now cast calm and inquiring glances at each other, to learn if either had sustained any injury by the fire; for both well knew that no cry or exclamation would, in such a moment of necessity, have been permitted to betray the accident. A few large drops of blood were trickling down the shoulder of the Sagamore, who, when he perceived that the eyes of Uncas dwelt too long on the sight, raised some water in the hollow of his hand, and washing off the stain, was content to manifest, in this simple manner, the slightness of the injury.

"Softly, softly, Major," said the scout, who by this time had reloaded his rifle; "we are a little too far already for a rifle to put forth its beauties, and you see yon-

der imps are holding a council. Let them come up within striking distance—my eye may well be trusted in such a matter—and I will trail the varlets the length of the Horican, guaranteeing that not a shot of theirs shall, at the worst, more than break the skin, while ‘Kill-deer’ shall touch the life twice in three times.”

“We forget our errand,” returned the diligent Duncan. “For God’s sake let us profit by this advantage, and increase our distance from the enemy.”

“Give me my children,” said Munro, hoarsely; “trifle no longer with a father’s agony, but restore me my babes.”

Long and habitual deference to the mandates of his superior had taught the scout the virtue of obedience. Throwing a last and lingering glance at the distant canoes, he laid aside his rifle, and relieving the wearied Duncan, resumed the paddle, which he wielded with sinews that never tired. His efforts were seconded by those of the Mohicans, and a very few minutes served to place such a sheet of water between them and their enemies, that Heyward once more breathed freely.

The lake now began to expand, and their route lay along a wide reach, that was lined, as before, by high and ragged mountains. But the islands were few, and easily avoided. The strokes of the paddles grew more measured and regular, while they who plied them continued their labor, after the close and deadly chase from which they had just relieved themselves, with as much coolness as though their speed had been tried in sport, rather than under such pressing, nay, almost desperate circumstances.

Instead of following the western shore whither their errand led them, the wary Mohican inclined his course more towards those hills behind which Montcalm was known to have led his army into the formidable fortress of Ticonderoga. As the Hurons, to every appearance, had abandoned the pursuit, there was no apparent reason for this excess of caution. It was, however, maintained for hours, until they had reached a bay nigh the northern termination of the lake. Here the canoe was

driven upon the beach, and the whole party landed. Hawkeye and Heyward ascended an adjacent bluff, where the former, after considering the expanse of water beneath him, pointed out to the latter a small black object, hovering under a headland, at the distance of several miles.

“Do you see it?” demanded the scout. “Now, what would you account that spot, were you left alone to white experience to find your way through this wilderness?”

“But for its distance and its magnitude, I should suppose it a bird. Can it be a living object?”

“Tis a canoe of good birchen bark, and paddled by fierce and crafty Mingoes. Though Providence has lent to those who inhabit the woods eyes that would be needless to men in the settlements, where there are inventions to assist the sight, yet no human organs can see all the dangers which at this moment circumvent us. These varlets pretend to be bent chiefly on their sun-down meal, but the moment it is dark they will be on our trail, as true as hounds on the scent. We must throw them off, or our pursuit of *Le Renard Subtil* may be given up. These lakes are useful at times, especially when the game takes the water,” continued the scout, gazing about him with a countenance of concern, “but they give no cover, except it be to the fishes. God knows what the country would be if the settlements should ever spread far from the two rivers. Both hunting and war would lose their beauty.”

“Let us not delay a moment, without some good and obvious cause.”

“I little like that smoke, which you may see worming up along the rock above the canoe,” interrupted the abstracted scout. “My life on it, other eyes than ours see it, and know its meaning. Well, words will not mend the matter, and it is time that we were doing.”

Hawkeye moved away from the lookout, and descended, musing profoundly, to the shore. He communicated the result of his observations to his companions, in Delaware, and a short and earnest consultation succeeded. When it terminated,

the three instantly set about executing their new resolutions.

The canoe was lifted from the water and borne on the shoulders of the party. They proceeded into the wood, making as broad and obvious a trail as possible. They soon reached a watercourse, which they crossed, and continued onward until they came to an extensive and naked rock. At this point, where their footsteps might be expected to be no longer visible, they retraced their route to the brook, walking backwards with the utmost care. They now followed the bed of the little stream to the lake, into which they immediately launched their canoe again. A low point concealed them from the headland, and the margin of the lake was fringed for some distance with dense and overhanging bushes. Under the cover of these natural advantages, they toiled their way with patient industry until the scout pronounced that he believed it would be safe once more to land.

The halt continued until evening rendered objects indistinct and uncertain to the eye. Then they resumed their route, and, favored by the darkness, pushed silently and vigorously towards the western shore. Although the rugged outline of mountain to which they were steering presented no distinctive marks to the eyes of Duncan, the Mohican entered the little haven he had selected with the confidence and accuracy of an experienced pilot.

The boat was again lifted and borne into the woods, where it was carefully concealed under a pile of brush. The adventurers assumed their arms and packs, and the scout announced to Munro and Heyward that he and the Indians were at last in readiness to proceed.

CHAPTER V.

If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death.

—MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

THE party had landed on the border of a region that is, even to this day, less known to the inhabitants of the States

than the deserts of Arabia, or the steppes of Tartary. It was the sterile and rugged district which separates the tributaries of Champlain from those of the Hudson, the Mohawk, and the St. Lawrence. Since the period of our tale, the active spirit of the country has surrounded it with a belt of rich and thriving settlements, though none but the hunter or the savage is ever known, even now, to penetrate its wild recesses.

As Hawkeye and the Mohicans had, however, often traversed the mountains and valleys of this vast wilderness, they did not hesitate to plunge into its depths with the freedom of men accustomed to its privations and difficulties. For many hours the travelers toiled on their laborious way, guided by a star, or following the direction of some water-course, until the scout called a halt, and holding a short consultation with the Indians, they lighted their fire, and made the usual preparations to pass the remainder of the night where they then were.

Imitating the example, and emulating the confidence, of their more experienced associates, Munro and Duncan slept without fear, if not without uneasiness. The dews were suffered to exhale, and the sun had dispersed the mists, and was shedding a strong and clear light in the forest, when the travelers resumed their journey.

After proceeding a few miles the progress of Hawkeye, who led the advance, became more deliberate and watchful. He often stopped to examine the trees; nor did he cross a rivulet without attentively considering the quantity, the velocity and the color of its waters. Distrusting his own judgment, his appeals to the opinion of Chingachgook were frequent and earnest. During one of these conferences Heyward observed that Uncas stood a patient and silent, though, as he imagined, an interested listener. He was strongly tempted to address the young chief and demand his opinion of their progress, but the calm and dignified demeanor of the native induced him to believe that, like himself, the other was wholly dependent on the sagacity and intelligence of the seniors of the party. At last the scout

spoke in English, and at once explained the embarrassment of their situation.

"When I found that the home path of the Hurons run north," he said, "it did not need the judgment of many long years to tell that they would follow the valleys and keep atween the waters of the Hudson and the Horican until they might strike the springs of the Canada streams, which would lead them into the heart of the country of the Frenchers. Yet here are we, within a short range of the Scaroon, and not a sign of a trail have we crossed. Human nature is weak, and it is possible we may not have taken the proper scent."

"Heaven protect us from such an error!" exclaimed Duncan. "Let us retrace our steps, and examine as we go with keener eyes. Has Uncas no council to offer in such a strait?"

The young Mohican cast a glance at his father, but maintaining his quiet and reserved mien, he continued silent. Chingachgook had caught the look, and motioning with his hand, he bade him speak. The moment this permission was accorded, the countenance of Uncas changed from its grave composure to a gleam of intelligence and joy. Bounding forward like a deer, he sprang up the side of a little acclivity, a few rods in advance, and stood, exultingly, over a spot of fresh earth, that looked as though it had been recently upturned by the passage of some heavy animal. The eyes of the whole party followed the unexpected movement, and read their success in the air of triumph that the youth assumed.

"'Tis the trail," exclaimed the scout, advancing to the spot; "the lad is quick of sight and keen of wit for his years."

"'Tis extraordinary that he should have withheld his knowledge so long," muttered Duncan, at his elbow.

"It would have been more wonderful had he spoken without a bidding. No, no; your young white, who gathers his learning from books and can measure what he knows by the page, may conceit that his knowledge, like his legs, outruns that of his father;

but where experience is the master, the scholar is made to know the value of years, and respects them accordingly."

"See!" said Uncas, pointing north and south, at the evident marks of the broad trail on either side of him; "the dark-hair has gone towards the frost."

"Hound never ran on a more beautiful scent," responded the scout, dashing forward, at once, on the indicated route; "we are favored, greatly favored, and can follow with high noses. Ay, here are both your waddling beasts; this Huron travels like a white general. The fellow is stricken with a judgment, and is mad! Look sharp for wheels, Sagamore," he continued, looking back, and laughing in his newly awakened satisfaction; "we shall have the fool journeying in a coach, and that with three of the best pair of eyes on the border in his rear."

The spirits of the scout and the astonishing success of the chase, in which a circuitous distance of more than forty miles had been passed, did not fail to impart a portion of hope to the whole party. Their advance was rapid and made with as much confidence as a traveler would proceed along a wide highway. If a rock or a rivulet or a bit of earth harder than common severed the links of the clew they followed, the true eye of the scout recovered them at a distance, and seldom rendered the delay of a single moment necessary. Their progress was much facilitated by the certainty that Magua had found it necessary to journey through the valleys; a circumstance which rendered the general direction of the route sure. Nor had the Huron entirely neglected the arts uniformly practiced by the native when retiring in front of an enemy. False trails and sudden turnings were frequent whenever a brook or the formation of the ground rendered them feasible; but his pursuers were rarely deceived, and never failed to detect their error before they had lost either time or distance on the deceptive track.

By the middle of the afternoon they had passed the Scaroon, and were following the route of the declining sun. After descending an eminence to a low bottom,

through which a swift stream glided, they suddenly came to a place where the party of Le Renard had made a halt. Extinguished brands were lying around a spring, the offals of a deer were scattered about the place, and the trees bore evident marks of having been browsed by the horses. At a little distance Heyward discovered, and contemplated with tender emotion, the small bower under which he was fain to believe that Cora and Alice had reposed. But while the earth was trodden, and the footsteps of both men and beasts were so plainly visible around the place, the trail appeared to have suddenly ended.

It was easy to follow the tracks of the Narragansetts, but they seemed only to have wandered without guides, or any other object than the pursuit of food. At length Uncas, who, with his father, had endeavored to trace the route of the horses, came upon a sign of their presence that was quite recent. Before following the clew, he communicated his success to his companions; and while the latter were consulting on the circumstance, the youth reappeared, leading the two fillies, with their saddles broken, and the housings soiled, as though they had been permitted to run at will for several days.

"What should this prove?" said Duncan, turning pale, and glancing his eyes around him, as if he feared the brush and leaves were about to give up some horrid secret.

"That our march is come to a quick end, and that we are in an enemy's country," returned the scout. "Had the knaves been pressed, and the gentle ones wanted horses to keep up with the party, he might have taken their scalps; but without an enemy at his heels, and with such ragged beasts as these, he would not hurt a hair of their heads. I know your thoughts, and shame be it to our color that you have reason for them; but he who thinks that even a Mingo would ill-treat a woman, unless it be to tomahawk her, knows nothing of Indian nature or the law of the woods. No, no; I have heard that the French Indians had come into these hills, to hunt the moose, and we

are getting within scent of their camp. Why should they not? the morning and evening guns of Ty may be heard any day among these mountains; for the Frenchers are running a new line between the provinces of the King and the Canadas. It is true that the horses are here, but the Hurons are gone; let us hunt for the path by which they departed."

Hawkeye and the Mohican now applied themselves to their task in good earnest. A circle of a few hundred feet in circumference was drawn, and each of the party took a segment for his portion. The examination, however, resulted in no discovery. The impressions of footsteps were numerous, but they all appeared like those of men who had wandered about the spot, without any design to quit it. Again the scout and his companions made the circuit of the halting-place, each slowly following the other, until they assembled in the center once more, no wiser than when they started.

"Such cunning is not without its devilry," exclaimed Hawkeye, when he met the disappointed looks of his assistants.

"We must get down to it, Sagamore, beginning at the spring, and going over the ground by inches. The Huron shall never brag in his tribe that he has a foot which leaves no print."

Setting the example himself, the scout engaged in the scrutiny with renewed zeal. Not a leaf was left unturned. The sticks were removed, and the stones lifted—for Indian cunning was known frequently to adopt these objects as covers, laboring with the utmost patience and industry, to conceal each footstep as they proceeded. Still no discovery was made. At length Uncas, whose activity had enabled him to achieve his portion of the task the soonest, raked the earth across the turbid little rill which ran from the spring, and diverted its course into another channel. So soon as its narrow bed below the dam was dry, he stooped over it with keen and curious eyes. A cry of exultation immediately announced the success of the young warrior. The whole party crowded to the spot, where Uncas pointed out the impression of a moccasin in the moist alluvium.

"The lad will be an honor to his people," said Hawkeye, regarding the trail with as much admiration as a naturalist would spend on the tusk of a mammoth or the rib of a mastodon; "ay, and a thorn in the sides of the Hurons. Yet that is not the footstep of an Indian! the weight is too much on the heel, and the toes are squared, as though one of the French dancers had been in, pigeon-winged his tribe! Run back, Uncas, and bring me the size of the singer's foot. You will find a beautiful print of it just opposite yon rock, ag'in the hillside."

While the youth was engaged in this commission the scout and Chingachgook were attentively considering the impressions. The measurements agreed, and the former unhesitatingly pronounced that the footstep was that of David, who had once more been made to exchange his shoes for moccasins.

"I can now read the whole of it as plainly as if I had seen the arts of Le Subtil," he added; "the singer being a man whose gifts lay chiefly in his throat and feet, was made to go first, and the others have trod in his steps, imitating their formation."

"But," cried Duncan, "I see no signs of—"

"The gentle ones," interrupted the scout; "the varlet has found a way to carry them, until he supposed he had thrown any followers off the scent. My life on it, we see their pretty little feet again before many rods go by."

The whole party now proceeded, following the course of the rill, keeping anxious eyes on the regular impressions. The water soon flowed into its bed again, but watching the ground on either side, the foresters pursued their way, content with knowing that the trail lay beneath. More than half a mile was passed before the rill rippled close around the base of an extensive and dry rock. Here they paused to make sure that the Hurons had not quitted the water.

It was fortunate they did so. For the quick and active Uncas soon found the impression of a foot on a bunch of moss, where it would seem an Indian had inad-

vertently trodden. Pursuing the direction given by this discovery he entered the neighboring thicket, and struck the trail, as fresh and obvious as it had been before they reached the spring. Another shout announced the good fortune of the youth to his companions, and at once terminated the search.

"Ay, it has been planned with Indian judgment," said the scout, when the party was assembled around the place; "and would have blinded white eyes."

"Shall we proceed?" demanded Heyward.

"Softly, softly! we know our path; but it is good to examine the formation of things. This is my schooling, Major; and if one neglects the book, there is little chance of learning from the open hand of Providence. All is plain but one thing, which is the manner that the knave contrived to get the gentle ones along the blind trail. Even a Huron would be too proud to let their tender feet touch the water."

"Will this assist in explaining the difficulty?" said Heyward, pointing towards the fragments of a sort of handbarrow, that had been rudely constructed of boughs, and bound together with withes, and which now seemed carelessly cast aside as useless.

"'Tis explained!" cried the delighted Hawkeye. "If them varlets have passed a minute they have spent hours in striving to fabricate a lying end to their trail! Well, I've known them waste a day in the same manner, to as little purpose. Here we have three pairs of moccasins and two of little feet. It is amazing that any mortal beings can journey on limbs so small! Pass me the thong of buckskin, Uncas, and let me take the length of this foot. By the Lord, it is no longer than a child's, and yet the maidens are tall and comely. That Providence is partial in its gifts, for its own wise reasons, the best and most contented of us must allow."

"The tender limbs of my daughters are unequal to these hardships," said Munro, looking at the light footsteps of his children with a parent's love; "we shall find their fainting forms in this desert."

"Of that there is little cause of fear," returned the scout, slowly shaking his head; "this is a firm and straight, though a light step, and not over long. See, the heel has hardly touched the ground, and there the dark-hair has made a little jump, from root to root. No, no; my knowledge for it, neither of them was nigh fainting, hereaway. Now, the singer was beginning to be foot-sore and leg-weary, as is plain by his trail. There, you see, he slipped; here he has traveled wide, and tottered; and there, again, it looks as though he journeyed on snow-shoes. Ay, ay, a man who uses his throat altogether can hardly give his legs a proper training."

From such undeniable testimony did the practiced woodsman arrive at the truth, with nearly as much certainty and precision as if he had been a witness of all those events which his ingenuity so easily elucidated. Cheered by these assurances and satisfied by a reasoning that was so obvious, while it was so simple, the party resumed its course, after making a short halt to take a hurried repast.

When the meal was ended, the scout cast a glance upwards at the setting sun, and pushed forward with a rapidity which compelled Heyward and the still vigorous Munro to exert all their muscles to equal. Their route, now, lay along the bottom which has already been mentioned. As the Hurons had made no further efforts to conceal their footsteps, the progress of the pursuers was no longer delayed by uncertainty. Before an hour had elapsed, however, the speed of Hawkeye sensibly abated, and his head, instead of maintaining its former direct and forward look, began to turn suspiciously from side to side, as if he were conscious of approaching danger. He soon stopped again and waited for the whole party to come up.

"I scent the Hurons," he said, speaking to the Mohicans; "yonder is open sky through the tree-tops, and we are getting too nigh their encampment. Sagamore, you will take the hillside, to the right; Uncas will bend along the brook to the left, while I will try the trail. If anything should happen, the call will be three

croaks of a crow. I saw one of the birds fanning himself in the air, just beyond the dead oak—another sign that we are touching an encampment."

The Indians departed their several ways without reply, while Hawkeye cautiously proceeded with the two gentlemen. Heyward soon pressed to the side of their guide, eager to catch an early glimpse of those enemies he had pursued with so much toil and anxiety. His companion told him to steal to the edge of the wood, which, as usual, was fringed with a thicket, and wait his coming, for he wished to examine certain suspicious signs a little on one side. Duncan obeyed, and soon found himself in a situation to command a view which he found as extraordinary as it was novel.

The trees of many acres had been felled, and the glow of a mild summer's evening had fallen on the clearing, in beautiful contrast to the gray light of the forest. A short distance from the place where Duncan stood, the stream had seemingly expanded into a little lake, covering most of the low land, from mountain to mountain. The water fell out of this wide basin, in a cataract so regular and gentle, that it appeared rather to be the work of human hands, than fashioned by Nature. A hundred earthen dwellings stood on the margin of the lake, and even in its water, as though the latter had overflowed its usual banks. Their rounded roofs, admirably molded for defense against the weather, denoted more of industry and foresight than the natives were wont to bestow on their regular habitations, much less on those they occupied for the temporary purposes of hunting and war. In short, the whole village or town, which ever it might be termed, possessed more of method and neatness of execution than the white men had been accustomed to believe belonged, ordinarily, to the Indian habits. It appeared, however, to be deserted. At least, so thought Duncan for many minutes; but at length he fancied he discovered several human forms advancing towards him on all-fours, and apparently dragging in their train some heavy, and

as he was quick to apprehend, some formidable engine. Just then a few dark-looking heads gleamed out of the dwellings, and the place seemed suddenly alive with beings, which, however, glided from cover to cover so swiftly as to allow no opportunity of examining their humors or pursuits. Alarmed at these suspicious and inexplicable movements, he was about to attempt the signal of the crows, when the rustling of leaves at hand drew his eyes in another direction.

The young man started, and recoiled a few paces instinctively, when he found himself within a hundred yards of a stranger Indian. Recovering his recollection on the instant, instead of sounding an alarm which might prove fatal to himself, he remained stationary, an attentive observer of the other's motions.

An instant of calm observation served to assure Duncan that he was undiscovered. The native, like himself, seemed occupied in considering the low dwellings of the village, and the stolen movements of its inhabitants. It was impossible to discover the expression of his features, through the grotesque mask of paint under which they were concealed; though Duncan fancied it was rather melancholy than savage. His head was shaved as usual, with the exception of the crown, from whose tuft three or four faded feathers from a hawk's wing were dangling. A ragged calico mantle half encircled his body, while his nether garment was composed of an ordinary shirt, the sleeves of which were made to perform the office that is usually executed by a much more commodious arrangement. His legs were bare, and sadly cut and torn by briars. The feet were, however, covered with a pair of good deer skin moccasins. Altogether the appearance of the individual was forlorn and miserable.

Duncan was still curiously observing the person of his neighbor, when the scout stole silently and cautiously to his side.

"You see we have reached their settlement or encampment," whispered the young man; "and here is one of the savages himself, in a very embarrassing position for our further movements."

Hawkeye started, and dropped his rifle, when directed by the finger of his companion, the stranger came under his view. Then lowering the dangerous muzzle, he stretched forward his long neck, as if to assist a scrutiny that was already intensely keen.

"The imp is not a Huron," he said, "nor of any of the Canada tribes; and yet you see by his clothes the knave has been plundering a white. Ay, Montcalm has raked the weeds for his inroad, and a whooping, murdering set of varlets has he gathered together. Can you see where he has put his rifle or his bow?"

"He appears to have no arms; nor does he seem to be viciously inclined. Unless he communicates the alarm to his fellows, who, as you see, are dodging about the water, we have but little to fear from him."

The scout turned to Heyward, and regarded him a moment with unconcealed amazement. Then opening wide his mouth, he indulged in unrestrained and heartfelt laughter, though in that silent and peculiar manner which danger had so long taught him to practice.

Repeating the words, "fellows who are dodging about the water," he added, "so much for schooling and passing a boyhood in the settlements! The knave has long legs, though, and shall not be trusted. Do you keep him under your rifle while I creep in behind, through the bush, and take him alive. Fire on no account."

Heyward had already permitted his companion to bury part of his person in the thicket, when, stretching forth an arm, he arrested him, in order to ask—

"If I see you in danger may I not risk a shot?"

Hawkeye regarded him a moment, like one who knew not how to take the question; then nodding his head, he answered, still laughing, though inaudibly—

"Fire a whole platoon, Major."

In the next moment he was concealed by the leaves. Duncan waited several minutes in feverish impatience before he caught another glimpse of the scout. Then he reappeared, creeping along the earth, from which his dress was hardly distinguishable, directly in the rear of his

intended captive. Having reached within a few yards of the latter, he arose to his feet, silently and slowly. At that instant several loud blows were struck on the water, and Duncan turned his eyes just in time to perceive that a hundred dark forms were plunging in a body into the troubled little sheet. Grasping his rifle, his looks were again bent on the Indian near him. Instead of taking the alarm, the unconscious savage stretched forward his neck, as if he also watched the movements about the gloomy lake, with a sort of silly curiosity. In the meantime the uplifted hand of Hawkeye was above him. But, without any apparent reason, it was withdrawn, and its owner indulged in another long, though still silent fit of merriment. When the peculiar and hearty laughter of Hawkeye was ended, instead of grasping his victim by the throat, he tapped him lightly on the shoulder, and exclaimed aloud—

“How now, friend, have you a mind to teach the beavers to sing?”

“Even so,” was the ready response. “It would seem that the Being that gave them power to improve His gifts so well would not deny them voices to proclaim His praise.”

CHAPTER XXII.

Bot.—Are we all met?

Qu.—Pat pat; and here's a marvelous
Convenient place for our rehearsal.

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE reader may better imagine, than we describe, the surprise of Heyward. His lurking Indians were suddenly converted into four-footed beasts; his lake into a beaver pond; his cataract into a dam constructed by those industrious and ingenious quadrupeds, and a suspected enemy into his tried friend, David Gamut, the master of psalmody. The presence of the latter created so many unexpected hopes relative to the sisters that, without a moment's hesitation, the young man broke out of his ambush and sprang forward to join the two principal actors in the scene.

The merriment of Hawkeye was not easily appeased. Without ceremony, and with a rough hand, he twirled the supple Gamut around on his heel, and more than once affirmed that the Hurons had done themselves great credit in the fashion of his costume. Then seizing the hand of the other, he squeezed it with a gripe that brought the tears into the eyes of the placid David, and wished him joy on his new condition.

“You were about opening your throat-practysings among the beavers, were ye?” he said. “The cunning devils know half the trade, already, for they beat the time with their tails, as you heard just now; and in good time it was too, or ‘Kill-deer’ might have sounded the first note among them. I have known greater fools, who could read and write, than an experienced old beaver; but as for squalling, the animals are born dumb!—What think you of such a song as this?”

David shut his sensitive ears, and even Heyward, apprised as he was of the nature of the cry, looked upwards in quest of the bird, as the cawing of a crow rang in the air about them.

“See,” continued the laughing scout, as he pointed towards the remainder of the party, who, in obedience to the signal, were already approaching: “this is music which has its natural virtues; it brings two good rifles to my elbow, to say nothing of the knives and tomahawks. But we see that you are safe; now tell us what has become of the maidens.”

“They are captives to the heathen,” said David, “and though greatly troubled in spirit, enjoying comfort and safety in the body.”

“Both?” demanded the breathless Heyward.

“Even so. Though our wayfaring has been sore and our sustenance scanty, we have had little other cause for complaint, except the violence done our feelings by being thus led in captivity in a far land.”

“Bless ye for these very words!” exclaimed the trembling Munro; “I shall then receive my babes, spotless and angel-like, as I lost them!”

“I know not that their delivery is at

hand," returned the doubting David. "The leader of these savages is possessed of an evil spirit that no power short of Omnipotence can tame. I have tried him sleeping and waking, but neither sounds nor language seem to touch his soul."

"Where is the knave?" bluntly interrupted the scout.

"He hunts the moose to-day with his young men, and to-morrow, as I hear, they pass further into these forests, and nigher to the borders of Canada. The elder maiden is conveyed to a neighboring people, whose lodges are situate beyond yonder black pinnacle of rock, while the younger is detained among the women of the Hurons, whose dwellings are but two short miles hence, on a table-land, where the fire has done the office of the axe, and prepared the place for their reception."

"Alice, my gentle Alice!" murmured Heyward; "she has lost the consolation of her sister's presence."

"Even so. But so far as praise and thanksgiving in psalmody can temper the spirit in affliction, she has not suffered."

"Has she then a heart for music?"

"Of the graver and more solemn character, though it must be acknowledged that, in spite of all my endeavors, the maiden weeps oftener than she smiles. At such moments I forbear to press the holy songs; but there are many sweet and comfortable periods of satisfactory communication, when the ears of the savages are astounded with the upliftings of our voices."

"And why are you permitted to go at large, unwatched?"

David composed his features into what he intended should express an air of modest humility, before he meekly replied—

"Little be the praise to such a worm as I. But, though the power of psalmody was suspended in the terrible business of that field of blood through which we passed, it has recovered its influence even over the souls of the heathen, and I am suffered to go and come at will."

The scout laughed and, tapping his own forehead significantly, he perhaps ex-

plained the singular indulgence more satisfactorily when he said—

"The Indians never harm a non-composser. But why, when the path lay open before your eyes, did you not strike back on your own trail (it is not so blind as that which a squirrel would make) and bring in the tidings to Edward?"

The scout, remembering only his own sturdy and iron nature, had probably exacted a task that David, under no circumstances, could have performed. But, without entirely losing the meekness of his air, the latter was content to answer—

"Though my soul would rejoice to visit the habitations of Christendom once more, my feet would rather follow the tender spirits intrusted to my keeping, even into the idolatrous province of the Jesuits, than take one step backward while they pined in captivity and sorrow."

Though the figurative language of David was not very intelligible, the sincere and steady expression of his eye and the glow on his honest countenance were not easily mistaken. Uncas pressed closer to his side, and regarded the speaker with a look of commendation, while his father expressed his satisfaction by the ordinary pithy exclamation of approbation. The scout shook his head as he rejoiced—

"The Lord never intended that the man should place all his endeavors in his throat, to the neglect of other and better gifts! But he has fallen into the hands of some silly woman, when he should have been gathering his education under a blue sky, among the beauties of the forest. Here, friend; I did intend to kindle a fire with this tooting whistle of thine; but as you value the thing, take it, and blow your best on it!"

Gamut received his pitch-pipe with as strong an expression of pleasure as he believed compatible with the grave functions he exercised. After essaying its virtues repeatedly, in contrast with his own voice, and satisfying himself that none of its melody was lost, he made a very serious demonstration towards achieving a few stanzas of one of the longest effusions in the little volume so often mentioned.

Heyward, however, hastily interrupted his pious purpose by continuing questions concerning the past and present condition of his fellow captives, and in a manner more methodical than had been permitted by his feelings in the opening of their interview. David, though he regarded his treasure with longing eyes, was constrained to answer; especially as the venerable father took a part in the interrogatories, with an interest too imposing to be denied. Nor did the scout fail to throw in a pertinent inquiry whenever a fitting occasion presented. In this manner, though with frequent interruptions, which were filled with certain threatening sounds from the recovered instrument, the pursuers were put in possession of such leading circumstances as were likely to prove useful in accomplishing their great and engrossing object—the recovery of the sisters. The narrative of David was simple, and the facts but few.

Magua had waited on the mountain until a safe moment to retire presented itself, when he had descended, and taken the route along the western side of the Horican, in the direction of the Canadas. As the subtle Huron was familiar with the paths, and well knew there was no immediate danger of pursuit, their progress had been moderate, and far from fatiguing. It appeared, from the unembellished statement of David, that his own presence had been rather endured than desired; though even Magua had not been entirely exempt from that veneration with which the Indians regard those whom the Great Spirit has visited in their intellects. At night the utmost care had been taken of the captives, both to prevent injury from the damps of the woods, and to guard against an escape. At the spring the horses were turned loose, as has been seen; and notwithstanding the remoteness and length of their trail, the artifices already named were resorted to, in order to cut off every clew to their place of retreat. On their arrival at the encampment of his people, Magua, in obedience to a policy seldom departed from, separated his prisoners. Cora had been sent to a

tribe that temporarily occupied an adjacent valley, though David was far too ignorant of the customs and history of the natives to be able to declare anything satisfactory concerning their name or character. He only knew that they had not engaged in the late expedition against William Henry; that, like the Hurons themselves, they were allies of Montcalm; and that they maintained an amicable though a watchful intercourse with the warlike and savage people, whom chance had, for a time, brought in such close and disagreeable contact with themselves.

The Mohicans and the scout listened to his interrupted and imperfect narrative with an interest that obviously increased as he proceeded; and it was while attempting to explain the pursuits of the community in which Cora was detained that the latter abruptly demanded—

“Did you see the fashion of their knives? were they of English or French formation?”

“My thoughts were bent on no such vanities, but rather mingled in consolation with those of the maidens.”

“The time may come when you will not consider the knife of a savage such a despicable vanity,” returned the scout, with a strong expression of contempt for the other’s dullness. “Had they held their corn-feast—or can you say anything of the totems of their tribe?”

“Of corn, we had many and plentiful feasts; for the grain, being in the milk, is both sweet to the mouth and comfortable to the stomach. Of totem, I know not the meaning; but if it appertaineth in any wise to the art of Indian music, it need not be inquired after at their hands. They never join their voices in praise, and it would seem that they are among the profanest of the idolatrous.”

“Therein you belie the nature of an Indian. Even the Mingo adores but the true and living God. ’Tis a wicked fabrication of the whites, and I say it to the shame of my color, that would make the warrior bow down before images of his own creation. It is true, they endeavor to make truces with the wicked one—as who would not with an enemy he cannot con-

quer!—but they look up for favor and assistance to the Great and Good Spirit only.”

“It may be so,” said David; “but I have seen strange and fantastic images drawn in their paint, of which their admiration and care savored of spiritual pride; especially one, and that, too, a foul and loathsome object.”

“Was it a serpent?” quickly demanded the scout.

“Much the same. It was in the likeness of an abject and creeping tortoise.”

“Hugh!” exclaimed both the attentive Mohicans in a breath; while the scout shook his head with the air of one who had made an important but by no means a pleasing discovery. Then the father spoke, in the language of the Delawares, and with a calmness and dignity that instantly arrested the attention even of those to whom his words were unintelligible. His gestures were impressive, and at times energetic. Once he lifted his arm on high; and as it descended, the action threw aside the folds of his light mantle, a finger resting on his breast, as if he would enforce his meaning by the attitude. Duncan’s eyes followed the movement, and he perceived that the animal just mentioned was beautifully, though faintly, worked in a blue tint, on the swarthy breast of the chief. All that he had ever heard of the violent separation of the vast tribes of the Delawares rushed across his mind, and he awaited the proper moment to speak, with a suspense that was rendered nearly intolerable by his interest in the stake. His wish, however, was anticipated by the scout, who turned from his friend, saying—

“We have found that which may be good or evil to us, as Heaven disposes. The Sagamore is of the high blood of the Delawares, and is the great chief of their Tortoises! That some of this stock are among the people of whom the singer tells us, is plain by his words; and had he but spent half the breath in prudent questions that he has blown away in making a trumpet of his throat, we might have known how many warriors they num-

bered. It is, altogether, a dangerous path we move in; for a friend whose face is turned from you often bears a bloodier mind than the enemy who seeks your scalp.”

“Explain,” said Duncan.

“’Tis a long and melancholy tradition, and one I little like to think of; for it is not to be denied that the evil has been mainly done by men with white skins. But it has ended in turning the tomahawk of brother against brother, and brought the Mingo and the Delaware to travel in the same path.”

“You then suspect it is a portion of that people among whom Cora resides?”

The scout nodded his head in assent, though he seemed anxious to waive the further discussion of a subject that appeared painful. The impatient Duncan now made several hasty and desperate propositions to attempt the release of the sisters. Munro seemed to shake off his apathy, and listened to the wild schemes of the young man with a deference that his gray hairs and reverend years should have denied. But the scout, after suffering the ardor of the lover to expend itself a little, found means to convince him of the folly of precipitation in a matter that would require their coolest judgment and utmost fortitude.

“It would be well,” he added, “to let this man go in again, as usual, and for him to tarry in the lodges, giving notice to the gentle ones of our approach, until we call him out, by signal, to consult. You know the cry of a crow, friend, from the whistle of the whip-poor-will?”

“’Tis a pleasing bird,” returned David, “and has a soft and melancholy note, though the time is rather quick and ill measured.”

“He speaks of the wish-ton-wish,” said the scout; “well, since you like his whistle, it shall be your signal. Remember, then, when you hear the whip-poor-will’s call three times repeated you are to come into the bushes where the bird might be supposed—”

“Stop!” interrupted Heyward; “I will accompany him.”

“You!” exclaimed the astonished

Hawkeye; "are you tired of seeing the sun rise and set?"

"David is a living proof that the Huron can be merciful."

"Ay, but David can use his throat, as no man in his senses would pervert the gift."

"I too can play the madman, the fool, the hero; in short, any or everything to rescue her I love. Name your objections no longer. I am resolved."

Hawkeye regarded the young man a moment in speechless amazement. But Duncan, who in deference to the other's skill and services had hitherto submitted somewhat implicitly to his dictation, now assumed the superior with a manner that was not easily resisted. He waved his hand in sign of his dislike to all remonstrance, and then, in more tempered language, he continued—

"You have the means of disguise; change me; paint me, too, if you will, in short, alter me to anything—a fool."

"It is not for one like me to say that he who is already formed by so powerful a hand as Providence stands in need of change," muttered the discontented scout. "When you send your parties abroad in war, you find it prudent, at least, to arrange the marks and places of encampment, in order that they who fight on your side may know when and where to expect a friend."

"Listen," interrupted Duncan; "you have heard from this faithful follower of the captives, that the Indians are of two tribes, if not of different nations. With one, whom you think to be a branch of the Delawares, is she you call the 'dark hair'; the other, and younger of the ladies, is undeniably with our declared enemies, the Hurons. It becomes my youth and rank to attempt the latter adventure. While you, therefore, are negotiating with your friends for the release of one of the sisters, I will effect that of the other, or die."

The awakened spirit of the young soldier gleamed in his eyes, and his form became imposing under its influence. Hawkeye, though too much accustomed to Indian artifices not to foresee the danger of

the experiment, knew not well how to combat this sudden resolution.

Perhaps there was something in the proposal that suited his own hardy nature and that secret love of desperate adventure which had increased with his experience, until hazard and danger had become, in some measure, necessary to the enjoyment of existence. Instead of continuing to oppose the scheme of Duncan, his humor suddenly altered, and he lent himself to its execution.

"Come," he said, with a good-humored smile; "the buck that will take to the water must be headed, and not followed. Chingachgook has as many different paints as the engineer officer's wife, who takes down nature on scraps of paper, making the mountains look like cocks of rusty hay, and placing the blue sky in reach of your hand. The Sagamore can use them too. Seat yourself on the log, and my life on it, he can soon make a natural fool of you, and that well to your liking."

Duncan complied; and the Mohican, who had been an attentive listener to the discourse, readily undertook the office. Long practiced in all the subtle arts of his race, he drew, with great dexterity and quickness, the fantastic shadow that the natives were accustomed to consider as the evidence of a friendly and jocular disposition. Every line that could possibly be interpreted into a secret inclination for war, was carefully avoided; while, on the other hand, he studied those conceits that might be construed into amity.

In short, he entirely sacrificed every appearance of the warrior to the masquerade of a buffoon. Such exhibitions were not uncommon among the Indians, and as Duncan was already sufficiently disguised in his dress, there certainly did exist some reason for believing that, with his knowledge of French, he might pass for a juggler from Ticonderoga, straggling among the allied and friendly tribes.

When he was thought to be sufficiently painted, the scout gave him much friendly advice, concerted signals, and appointed the place where they should meet, in the

event of mutual success. The parting between Munro and his young friend was more melancholy; still, the former submitted to the separation with an indifference that his warm and honest nature would never have permitted in a more healthful state of mind. The scout led Heyward aside, and acquainted him with his intention to leave the veteran in some safe encampment, in charge of Chingachgook, while he and Uncas pursued their inquiries among the people they had reason to believe were Delawares. Then renewing his cautions and advice, he concluded by saying, with a solemnity and warmth of feeling with which Duncan was deeply touched—

“And now God bless you! You have shown a spirit that I like; for it is the gift of youth, more especially one of warm blood and a stout heart. But believe the warning of a man who has reason to know all he says to be true. You will have occasion for your best manhood, and for a sharper wit than what is to be gathered in books, afore you outdo the cunning or get the better of the courage of a Mingo. God bless you! if the Hurons master your scalp, rely on the promise of one who has two stout warriors to back him. They shall pay for their victory with a life for every hair it holds. I say, young gentleman, may Providence bless your undertaking, which is altogether for good; and remember, that to outwit the knaves it is lawful to practice things that may not be naturally the gift of a white skin.”

Duncan shook his worthy and reluctant associate warmly by the hand, once more recommended his aged friend to his care, and returning his good wishes, he motioned to David to proceed. Hawkeye gazed after the high-spirited and adventurous young man for several moments, in open admiration; then shaking his head doubtfully, he turned and led his own division of the party into the concealment of the forest.

The route taken by Duncan and David lay directly across the clearing of the beavers, and along the margin of their pond.

When the former found himself alone

with one so simple and so little qualified to render any assistance in desperate emergencies, he first began to be sensible of the difficulties of the task he had undertaken. The fading light increased the gloominess of the bleak and savage wilderness that stretched so far on every side of him; and there was even a fearful character in the stillness of those little huts, that he knew was so abundantly peopled. It struck him, as he gazed at the admirable structures and the wonderful precautions of their sagacious inmates, that even the brutes of these vast wilds were possessed of an instinct nearly commensurate with his own reason; and he could not reflect, without anxiety, on the unequal contest that he had so rashly courted. Then came the glowing image of Alice; her distress; her actual danger; and all the peril of his situation was forgotten. Cheering David, he moved on with the light and vigorous step of youth and enterprise.

After making nearly a semicircle around the pond, they diverged from the water-course, and began to ascend to the level of a slight elevation in that bottom land over which they journeyed. Within half an hour they gained the margin of another opening that bore all the signs of having been also made by the beavers, and which those sagacious animals had probably been induced, by some accident, to abandon for the more eligible position they now occupied. A very natural sensation caused Duncan to hesitate a moment, unwilling to leave the cover of their bushy path, as a man pauses to collect his energies before he essays any hazardous experiment, in which he is secretly conscious they will all be needed. He profited by the halt to gather such information as might be obtained from his short and hasty glances.

On the opposite side of the clearing, and near the point where the brook tumbled over some rocks from a still higher level, some fifty or sixty lodges, rudely fabricated of logs, brush and earth intermingled, were to be discovered. They were arranged without any order, and seemed to be constructed with very little

attention to neatness or beauty. Indeed, so very inferior were they in the two latter particulars to the village Duncan had just seen, that he began to expect a second surprise, no less astonishing than the former. This expectation was in no degree diminished when, by the doubtful twilight, he beheld twenty or thirty forms rising alternately from the cover of the tall, coarse grass in front of the lodges, and then sinking again from the sight, as it were to burrow in the earth. By the sudden and hasty glimpses that he caught of these figures, they seemed more like dark, glancing specters, or some other unearthly beings, than creatures fashioned with the ordinary and vulgar materials of flesh and blood. A gaunt, naked form was seen, for a single instant, tossing its arms wildly in the air, and then the spot it had filled was vacant, the figure appearing suddenly in some other and distant place, or being succeeded by another possessing the same mysterious character. David observing that his companion lingered, pursued the direction of his gaze, and in some measure recalled the recollection of Heyward by speaking.

"There is much fruitful soil uncultivated here," he said; "and I may add, without the sinful leaven of self-commendation, that since my short sojourn in these heathenish abodes, much good seed has been scattered by the wayside."

"The tribes are fonder of the chase than of the arts of men of labor," returned the unconscious Duncan, still gazing at the objects of his wonder.

"It is rather joy than labor to the spirit to lift up the voice in praise; but sadly do these boys abuse their gifts. Rarely have I found any of their age on whom nature has so freely bestowed the elements of psalmody; and surely, surely there are none who neglect them more. Three nights have I now tarried here, and three several times have I assembled the urchins to join in sacred song; and as often have they responded to my efforts with whooping and howlings that have chilled my soul!"

"Of whom speak you?"

"Of those children of the devil, who

waste the precious moments in yonder idle antics. Ah! the wholesome restraint of discipline is but little known among this self-abandoned people. In a country of birches, a rod is never seen; and it ought not to appear a marvel in my eyes that the choicest blessings of Providence are wasted in such cries as these."

David closed his ears against the juvenile pack, whose yell just then rang shrilly through the forest; and Duncan, suffering his lip to curl, as in mockery of his own superstition, said firmly—

"We will proceed."

Without removing the safeguards from his ears, the master of song complied, and together they pursued their way towards what David was sometimes wont to call "the tents of the Philistines."

CHAPTER XXIII.

—But though the beast of game
The privilege of chase may claim,
Though space and law the stag we lend,
Ere hound we slip, or bow we bend;
Who ever recked, where, how, or when
The prowling fox was trapped or slain?

—LADY OF THE LAKE.

It is unusual to find an encampment of the natives, like those of the more instructed whites, guarded by the presence of armed men. Well informed of the approach of every danger, while it is yet at a distance, the Indian generally rests secure under his knowledge of the signs of the forest and the long and difficult paths that separate him from those he has most reason to dread. But the enemy who, by any lucky concurrence of accidents, has found means to elude the vigilance of the scouts, will seldom meet with sentinels nearer home to sound the alarm. In addition to this general usage, the tribes friendly to the French knew too well the weight of the blow that had just been struck, to apprehend any immediate danger from the hostile nations that were tributary to the crown of Britain.

When Duncan and David, therefore, found themselves in the center of the children, who played the antics already mentioned, it was without the least pre-

vious intimation of their approach. But so soon as they were observed, the whole of the juvenile pack raised, by common consent, a shrill and warning whoop; and then sank, as it were by magic, from before the sight of their visitors. The naked, tawny bodies of the crouching urchins blended so nicely, at that hour, with the withered herbage, that at first it seemed as if the earth had, in truth, swallowed up their forms; though when surprise permitted Duncan to bend his look more curiously about the spot, he found it everywhere met by dark, quick, and rolling eyeballs.

Gathering no encouragement from this startling presage of the nature of the scrutiny he was likely to undergo from the more mature judgments of the men, there was an instant when the young soldier would have retreated. It was, however, too late to appear to hesitate. The cry of the children had drawn a dozen warriors to the door of the nearest lodge, where they stood clustered in a dark and savage group, gravely awaiting the nearer approach of those who had unexpectedly come among them.

David, in some measure familiarized to the scene, led the way, with a steadiness that no slight obstacle was likely to disconcert, into this very building. It was the principal edifice of the village, though roughly constructed of the bark and branches of trees; being the lodge in which the tribe held its councils and public meetings during their temporary residence on the borders of the English province. Duncan found it difficult to assume the necessary appearance of unconcern, as he brushed the dark and powerful frames of the savages who thronged its threshold; but, conscious that his existence depended on his presence of mind, he trusted to the discretion of his companion, whose footsteps he closely followed, endeavoring, as he proceeded, to rally his thoughts for the occasion. His blood curdled when he found himself in absolute contact with such fierce and implacable enemies; but he so far mastered his feelings as to pursue his way into the center of the lodge with an exterior that did not betray

the weakness. Imitating the example of the deliberate Gamut, he drew a bundle of fragrant brush from beneath a pile that filled the corner of the hut, and seated himself in silence.

So soon as their visitor had passed, the observant warriors fell back from the entrance, and arranging themselves about him, they seemed patiently to await the moment when it might comport with the dignity of the stranger to speak. By far the greater number stood leaning, in lazy, lounging attitudes, against the upright posts that supported the crazy building, while three or four of the oldest and most distinguished of the chiefs placed themselves on the earth a little more in advance.

A flaring torch was burning in the place, and set its red glare from face to face and figure to figure, as it waived in the currents of air. Duncan profited by its light to read the probable character of his reception in the countenances of his hosts. But his ingenuity availed him little against the cold artifices of the people he had encountered. The chiefs in front scarce cast a glance at his person, keeping their eyes on the ground with an air that might have been intended for respect, but which it was quite easy to construe into distrust. The men in shadow were less reserved. Duncan soon detected their searching but stolen looks, which, in truth, scanned his person and attire inch by inch; leaving no emotion of the countenance, no gesture, no line of the paint, nor even the fashion of a garment unheeded and without comment.

At length one whose hair was beginning to be sprinkled with gray, but whose sinewy limbs and firm tread announced that he was still equal to the duties of manhood, advanced out of the gloom of a corner, whither he had probably posted himself to make his observations unseen, and spoke. He used the language of the Wyandots or Hurons; his words were, consequently unintelligible to Heyward, though they seemed, by the gestures that accompanied them, to be uttered more in courtesy than anger. The latter shook his head, and made a gesture indicative of his inability to reply.

"Do none of my brothers speak the French or the English?" he said in the former language, looking about him from countenance to countenance, in hopes of finding a nod of assent.

Though more than one had turned, as if to catch the meaning of his words, they remained unanswered.

"I should be grieved to think," continued Duncan, speaking slowly and using the simplest French of which he was the master, "to believe that none of this wise and brave nation understand the language that the 'Grand Monarque' uses when he talks to his children. His heart would be heavy did he believe his red warriors paid him so little respect!"

A long and grave pause succeeded, during which no movement of a limb nor any expression of an eye betrayed the impression produced by his remark. Duncan, who knew that silence was a virtue amongst his hosts, gladly had recourse to the custom in order to arrange his ideas. At length the same warrior who had before addressed him replied, by dryly demanding, in the language of the Canadas—

"When our Great Father speaks to his people, is it with the tongue of a Huron?"

"He knows no difference in his children, whether the color of the skin be red, or black, or white," returned Duncan, evasively; "though chiefly is he satisfied with the brave Hurons."

"In what manner will he speak," demanded the wary chief, "when the runners count to him the scalps which five nights ago grew on the heads of the Yengeese?"

"They were his enemies," said Duncan, shuddering involuntarily; "and, doubtless, he will say, It is good—my Hurons are very gallant."

"Our Canada father does not think it. Instead of looking forward to reward his Indians, his eyes are turned backward. He sees the dead Yengeese, but no Huron. What can this mean?"

"A great chief like him has more thoughts than tongues. He looks to see that no enemies are on his trail."

"The canoe of a dead warrior will not

float on the Horican," returned the savage gloomily. "His ears are open to the Delawares, who are not our friends, and they will fill them with lies."

"It cannot be. See; he has bid me, who am a man that knows the art of healing, to go to his children, the red Hurons of the great lakes, and ask if any are sick!"

Another silence succeeded this announcement of the character Duncan had assumed. Every eye was simultaneously bent on his person, as if to inquire into the truth or falsehood of the declaration, with an intelligence and keenness that caused the subject of their scrutiny to tremble for the result. He was, however, relieved again by the former speaker.

"Do the cunning men of the Canadas paint their skins?" the Huron coldly continued; "we have heard them boast that their faces were pale."

"When an Indian chief comes among his white fathers," returned Duncan, with great steadiness, "he lays aside his buffalo robe, to carry the shirt that is offered him. My brothers have given me paint, and I wear it."

A low murmur of applause announced that the compliment to the tribe was favorably received. The elderly chief made a gesture of commendation, which was answered by most of his companions, who each threw forth a hand, and uttered a brief exclamation of pleasure. Duncan began to breathe more freely, believing that the weight of his examination was past; and as he had already prepared a simple and probable tale to support his pretended occupation, his hopes of ultimate success grew brighter.

After a silence of a few moments, as if adjusting his thoughts, in order to make a suitable answer to the declaration their guests had just given, another warrior arose and placed himself in an attitude to speak. While his lips were yet in the act of parting, a low but fearful sound arose from the forest, and was immediately succeeded by a high-shrill yell, that was drawn out until it equaled the longest and most plaintive howl of the wolf. The sudden and terrible interruption caused

Duncan to start from his seat, unconscious of everything but the effect produced by so frightful a cry. At the same moment, the warriors glided in a body from the lodge, and the outer air was filled with loud shouts that nearly drowned those awful sounds, which were still ringing beneath the arches of the woods. Unable to command himself any longer, the youth broke from the place, and presently stood in the center of a disorderly throng, that included nearly everything having life within the limits of the encampment. Men, women, and children; the aged, the infirm, the active, and the strong, were alike abroad, some exclaiming aloud, others clapping their hands with a joy that seemed frantic, and all expressing their savage pleasure in some unexpected event. Though astounded at first by the uproar, Heyward was soon enabled to find its solution by the scene that followed.

There yet lingered sufficient light in the heavens to exhibit those bright openings among the tree-tops, where different paths left the clearing to enter the depths of the wilderness. Beneath one of them, a line of warriors issued from the woods and advanced slowly towards the dwellings. One in front bore a short pole, on which, as it afterwards appeared were suspended several human scalps. The startling sounds that Duncan had heard were what the whites have, not inappropriately, called the "death-hallo;" and each repetition of the cry was intended to announce to the tribe the fate of an enemy. Thus far the knowledge of Heyward assisted him in the explanation; and as he knew that the interruption was caused by the unlooked-for return of a successful war-party, every disagreeable sensation was quieted in inward congratulations for the opportune relief and insignificance it conferred on himself.

When at the distance of a few hundred feet from the lodges, the newly arrived warriors halted. The plaintive and terrific cry, which was intended to represent equally the wailings of the dead and the triumph of the victors, had entirely ceased. One of their number now called aloud, in

words that were far from appalling, though not more intelligible to those for whose ears they were intended, than their expressive yells. It would be difficult to convey a suitable idea of the savage ecstasy with which the news, thus imparted, was received. The whole encampment, in a moment, became a scene of the most violent bustle and commotion. The warriors drew their knives, and flourishing them, they arranged themselves in two lines, forming a lane that extended from the war-party to the lodges. The squaws seized clubs, axes, or whatever weapon of offense first offered itself to their hands, and rushed eagerly to act their part in the cruel game that was at hand. Even the children would not be excluded; but boys, little able to wield the instruments, tore the tomahawks from the belts of their fathers, and stole into the ranks, apt imitators of the savage traits exhibited by their parents.

Large piles of brush lay scattered about the clearing, and a wary and aged squaw was occupied firing as many as might serve to light the coming exhibition. As the flame arose its power exceeded that of the parting day, and assisted to render objects at the same time more distinct and more hideous. The whole scene formed a striking picture, whose frame was composed of the dark and tall border of pines. The warriors just arrived were the most distant figures. A little in advance stood two men, who were apparently selected from the rest as the principal actors in what was to follow. The light was not strong enough to render their features distinct, though it was quite evident that they were governed by very different emotions. While one stood erect and firm, prepared to meet his fate like a hero, the other bowed his head, as if palsied by terror or stricken with shame. The high-spirited Duncan felt a powerful impulse of admiration and pity towards the former, though no opportunity could offer to exhibit his generous emotions. He watched his slightest movement, however, with eager eyes; and as he traced the fine outline of his admirably proportioned and active frame, he endeav-

ored to persuade himself that if the powers of man, seconded by such noble resolution, could bear one harmless through so severe a trial, the youthful captive before him might hope for success in the hazardous race he was about to run. Insensibly the young man drew nigher to the swarthy lines of the Hurons, and scarcely breathed, so intense became his interest in the spectacle. Just then the signal yell was given, and the momentary quiet which had preceded it was broken by a burst of cries that far exceeded any before heard. The most abject of the two victims continued motionless; but the other bounded from the place at the cry with the activity and swiftness of a deer. Instead of rushing through the hostile lines as had been expected, he just entered the dangerous defile, and before the time was given for a single blow, turned short, and leaping the heads of a row of children he gained at once the exterior and safer side of the formidable array. The artifice was answered by a hundred voices raised in imprecations; and the whole of the excited multitude broke from their order and spread themselves about the place in wild confusion.

A dozen blazing piles now shed their lurid brightness on the place, which resembled some unhallowed and supernatural arena, in which malicious demons had assembled to act their bloody and lawless rites. The forms in the background looked like unearthly beings, gliding before the eye, and cleaving the air with frantic and unmeaning gestures; while the savage passions of such as passed the flames were rendered fearfully distinct by the gleams that shot athwart their inflamed visages.

It will be easily understood that amid such a concourse of vindictive enemies, no breathing time was allowed the fugitive. There was a single moment when it seemed as if he would have reached the forest, but the whole body of his captors threw themselves before him and drove him back into the center of his relentless persecutors. Turning like a headed deer he shot, with the swiftness of an arrow, through a pillar of forked flame, and passing the whole

multitude harmless, he appeared on the opposite side of the clearing. Here, too, he was met and turned by a few of the older and more subtle of the Hurons. Once more he tried the throng, as if seeking safety in its blindness, and then several moments succeeded, during which Duncan believed the active and courageous young stranger was lost.

Nothing could be distinguished but a dark mass of human forms tossed and involved in inexplicable confusion. Arms, gleaming knives and formidable clubs appeared above them, but the blows were evidently given at random. The awful effect was heightened by the piercing shrieks of the women and the fierce yells of the warriors. Now and then Duncan caught a glimpse of a light from cleaving the air in some desperate bound, and he rather hoped than believed that the captive yet retained the command of his astonishing powers of activity. Suddenly the multitude rolled backward, and approached the spot where he himself stood. The heavy body in the rear pressed upon the women and children in front and bore them to the earth. The stranger reappeared in the confusion. Human power could not, however, much longer endure so severe a trial. Of this the captive seemed conscious. Profiting by the momentary opening, he darted from among the warriors and made a desperate and what seemed to Duncan a final effort to gain the wood. As if aware that no danger was to be apprehended from the young soldier, the fugitive nearly brushed his person in his flight. A tall and powerful Huron, who had husbanded his forces, pressed close upon his heels, and with an uplifted arm menaced a fatal blow. Duncan thrust forth a foot, and the shock precipitated the eager savage headlong, many feet in advance of his intended victim. Thought itself is not quicker than was the motion with which the latter profited by the advantage; he turned, gleamed like a meteor again before the eyes of Duncan, and at the next moment, when the latter recovered his recollection and gazed around in quest of the captive, he saw him quietly leaning against a

small painted post, which stood before the door of the principal lodge.

Apprehensive that the part he had taken in the escape might prove fatal to himself, Duncan left the place without delay. He followed the crowd, which drew nigh the lodges, gloomy and sullen, like any other multitude that had been disappointed in an execution. Curiosity, or perhaps a better feeling, induced him to approach the stranger. He found him standing with one arm cast about the protecting post, and breathing thick and hard, after his exertions, but disdaining to permit a single sign of suffering to escape. His person was now protected by immemorial and sacred usage, until the tribe in council had deliberated and determined on his fate. It was not difficult, however, to foretell the result, if any presage could be drawn from the feelings of those who crowded the place.

There was no term of abuse known to the Huron vocabulary that the disappointed women did not lavishly expend on the successful stranger. They flouted at his efforts and told him, with bitter scoffs, that his feet were better than his hands, and that he merited wings, while he knew not the use of an arrow or a knife. To all this the captive made no reply, but was content to preserve an attitude in which dignity was singularly blended with disdain. Exasperated as much by his composure as by his good fortune, their words became unintelligible, and were succeeded by shrill piercing yells. Just then the crafty squaw, who had taken the necessary precautions to fire the piles, made her way through the throng, and cleared a place for herself in front of the captive. The squalid and withered person of this hag might well have obtained for her the character of possessing more than human cunning. Throwing back her light vestment, she stretched forth her long skinny arm in derision, and using the language of the Lenape, as more intelligible to the subject of her jibes, she commenced aloud—

“Look you, Delaware !” she said, snapping her fingers in his face ; “your nation is a race of women, and the hoe is better fitted to your hands than the gun. Your

squaws are the mothers of deer ; but if a bear, or a wildcat, or a serpent were born among you, ye would flee. The Huron girls shall make you petticoats, and we will find you a husband.”

A burst of savage laughter succeeded this attack, during which the soft and musical merriment of the younger females strangely chimed with the cracked voice of their older and more malignant companion. But the stranger was superior to all their efforts. His head was immovable ; nor did he betray the slightest consciousness that any were present, except when his haughty eye rolled towards the dusky forms of the warriors, who stalked in the background, silent and sullen observers of the scene.

Infuriated at the self-command of the captive, the woman placed her arms akimbo, and throwing herself into a posture of defiance, she broke out anew in a torrent of words that no art of ours could commit successfully to paper. Her breath was, however, expended in vain ; for, although distinguished in her nation as a proficient in the art of abuse, she was permitted to work herself into such a fury as actually to foam at the mouth, without causing a muscle to vibrate in the motionless figure of the stranger. The effect of his indifference began to extend itself to the other spectators, and a youngster, who was just quitting the condition of a boy to enter the state of manhood, attempted to assist the termagant by flourishing his tomahawk before their victim, and adding his empty boasts to the taunts of the woman. Then, indeed, the captive turned his face towards the light, and looked down on the stripling with an expression that was superior to contempt. At the next moment he resumed his quiet and reclining attitude against the post. But the change of posture had permitted Duncan to exchange glances with the firm and piercing eyes of Uncas.

Breathless with amazement, and heavily oppressed with the critical situation of his friend, Heyward recoiled before the look, trembling lest its meaning might, in some unknown manner, hasten the prisoner's fate. There was not, however, any in-

stant cause for such an apprehension. Just then a warrior forced his way into the exasperated crowd. Motioning the women and children aside with a stern gesture, he took Uncas by the arm and led him towards the door of the council lodge. Thither all the chiefs and most of the distinguished warriors followed, among whom the anxious Heyward found means to enter without attracting any dangerous attention to himself.

A few minutes were consumed in disposing of those present in a manner suitable to their rank and influence in the tribe. An order very similar to that adopted in the preceding interview was observed—the aged and superior chiefs occupying the area of the spacious apartment, within the powerful light of a glaring torch, while their juniors and inferiors were arranged in the background, presenting a dark outline of swarthy and marked visages. In the very center of the lodge, immediately under an opening that admitted the twinkling light of one or two stars, stood Uncas, calm, elevated and collected. His high and haughty carriage was not lost on his captors, who often bent their looks on his person with eyes which, while they lost none of their inflexibility of purpose, plainly betrayed their admiration of the stranger's daring.

The case was different with the individual whom Duncan had observed to stand forth with his friend previously to the desperate trial of speed; and who, instead of joining in the chase, had remained throughout its turbulent uproar like a cringing statue, expressive of shame and disgrace. Though not a hand had been extended to greet him, nor yet an eye had condescended to watch his movements, he had also entered the lodge, as though impelled by a fate to whose decrees he submitted, seemingly, without a struggle. Heyward profited by the first opportunity to gaze in his face, secretly apprehensive he might find the features of another acquaintance; but they proved to be those of a stranger, and, what was still more inexplicable, of one who bore all the distinctive marks of a Huron warrior. Instead of mingling with his tribe, however, he sat apart, a

solitary being in the multitude, his form shrinking into a crouching and abject attitude, as if anxious to fill as little space as possible. When each individual had taken his proper station, and silence reigned in the place, the gray-haired chief already introduced to the reader spoke aloud, in the language of the Lenni Lenape.

"Delaware," he said, "though one of a nation of women, you have proved yourself a man; I would give you food; but he who eats with a Huron should become his friend. Rest in peace till the morning sun, when our last words shall be spoken."

"Seven nights, and as many summer days, have I fasted on the trail of the Hurons," Uncas coldly replied; "the children of the Lenape know how to travel the path of the just without lingering to eat."

"Two of my young men are in pursuit of your companion," resumed the other, without appearing to regard the boast of his captive; "when they get back, then will our wise men say to you 'live or die.'"

"Has a Huron no ears?" scornfully exclaimed Uncas; "twice, since he has been your prisoner, has the Delaware heard a gun that he knows. Your young men will never come back."

A short and sullen pause succeeded this bold assertion. Duncan, who understood the Mohican to allude to the fatal rifle of the scout, bent forward in earnest observation of the effect it might produce on the conquerors; but the chief was content with simply retorting—

"If the Lenape are so skillful, why is one of their bravest warriors here?"

"He followed in the steps of a flying coward, and fell into a snare. The cunning beaver may be caught."

As Uncas thus replied, he pointed with his finger towards the solitary Huron, but without deigning to bestow any other notice on so unworthy an object. The words of the answer and the air of the speaker produced a strong sensation among his auditors. Every eye rolled sullenly towards the individual indicated by the simple gesture, and a low, threat-

ening murmur passed through the crowd. The ominous sounds reached the outer door, and the women and children pressing into the throng, no gap had been left, between shoulder and shoulder, that was not now filled with the dark lineaments of some eager and curious human countenance.

In the meantime the more aged chiefs, in the center, communed with each other in short and broken sentences. Not a word was uttered that did not convey the meaning of the speaker, in the simplest and most energetic form. Again, a long and deeply solemn pause took place. It was known, by all present, to be the grave precursor of a weighty and important judgment. They who composed the outer circle of faces were on tiptoe to gaze; and even the culprit for an instant forgot his shame in a deeper emotion, and exposed his abject features in order to cast an anxious and troubled glance at the dark assemblage of chiefs. The silence was finally broken by the aged warrior so often named. He arose from the earth, and moving past the immovable form of Uncas, placed himself in a dignified attitude before the offender. At that moment the withered squaw already mentioned moved into the circle, in a slow, sideling sort of a dance, holding the torch, and muttering the indistinct words of what might have been a species of incantation. Though her presence was altogether an intrusion, it was unheeded.

Approaching Uncas, she held the blazing brand in such a manner as to cast its red glare on his person, and to expose the slightest emotion of his countenance. The Mohican maintained his firm and haughty attitude; and his eye, so far from deigning to meet her inquisitive look, dwelt steadily on the distance, as though it penetrated the obstacles which impeded the view, and looked into futurity. Satisfied with her examination, she left him, with a slight expression of pleasure, and proceeded to practice the same trying experiment on her delinquent countrymen.

The young Huron was in his war paint, and very little of a finely molded form was concealed by his attire. The light

rendered every limb and joint discernible, and Duncan turned away in horror when he saw they were writhing in inexpressible agony. The woman was commencing a low and plaintive howl at the sad and shameful spectacle, when the chief put forth his hand and gently pushed her aside.

"Reed-that-bends," he said, addressing the young culprit by name and in his proper language, "though the Great Spirit has made you pleasant to the eyes, it would have been better that you had not been born. Your tongue is loud in the village, but in battle it is still. None of my young men strike the tomahawk deeper into the war-post—none of them so lightly on the Yengeese. The enemy know the shape of your back, but they have never seen the color of your eyes. Three times have they called on you to come, and as often did you forget to answer. Your name will never be mentioned again in your tribe—it is already forgotten."

As the chief slowly uttered these words, pausing impressively between each sentence, the culprit raised his face in deference to the other's rank and years. Shame, horror and pride struggled in its lineaments. His eye, which was contracted with inward anguish, gleamed on the persons of those whose breath was his fame, and the latter emotion for an instant predominated. He arose to his feet, and baring his bosom, looked steadily on the keen, glittering knife that was already upheld by his inexorable judge. As the weapon passed slowly into his heart he even smiled, as if in joy at having found death less dreadful than he had anticipated, and fell heavily on his face, at the feet of the rigid and unyielding form of Uncas.

The squaw gave a loud and plaintive yell, dashed the torch to the earth, and buried everything in darkness. The whole shuddering groups of spectators glided from the lodge like troubled sprites, and Duncan thought that he and the yet throbbing body of the victim of an Indian judgment had now become its only tenants.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Thus spoke the sage : the kings without delay
Dissolve the council, and their chief obey.

—POPE'S ILIAD.

A SINGLE moment served to convince the youth that he was mistaken. A hand was laid, with a powerful pressure, on his arm, and the low voice of Uncas muttered in his ears—

"The Hurons are dogs. The sight of a coward's blood can never make a warrior tremble. The 'Gray Head' and the Sagamore are safe, and the rifle of Hawkeye is not asleep. Go—Uncas and the 'Open Hand' are now strangers. It is enough."

Heyward would gladly have heard more, but the gentle push from his friend urged him towards the door, and admonished him of the danger that might attend the discovery of their intercourse. Slowly and reluctantly yielding to the necessity, he quitted the place, and mingled with the throng that hovered nigh. The dying fires in the clearing cast a dim and uncertain light on the dusky figures that were silently stalking to and fro; and occasionally a brighter gleam than common glanced into the lodge, and exhibited the figure of Uncas still maintaining his upright attitude near the dead body of the Huron.

A knot of warriors soon entered the place again, and re-issuing they bore the senseless remains into the adjacent woods. After this termination of the scene, Duncan wandered among the lodges, unquestioned and unnoticed, endeavoring to find some trace of her in whose behalf he incurred the risk he ran. In the present temper of the tribe, it would have been easy to have fled and rejoined his companions, had such a wish crossed his mind. But, in addition to the never-ceasing anxiety on account of Alice, a fresher, though feebler, interest in the fate of Uncas assisted to chain him to the spot. He continued, therefore, to stray from hut to hut, looking into each only to encounter additional disappointment, until he had made the entire circuit of the village. Abandoning a species of inquiry that proved so fruitless, he retraced his steps

to the council lodge, resolved to seek and question David, in order to put an end to his doubts.

On reaching the building which had proved alike the seat of judgment and the place of execution, the young man found that the excitement had already subsided. The warriors had re-assembled, and were now calmly smoking, while they conversed gravely on the chief incidents of their recent expedition to the head of the Hurican. Though the return of Duncan was likely to remind them of his character, and the suspicious circumstances of his visit, it produced no visible sensation. So far, the terrible scene that had just occurred proved favorable to his views, and he required no other prompter than his own feelings to convince him of the expediency of profiting by so unexpected an advantage.

Without seeming to hesitate, he walked into the lodge and took his seat with a gravity that accorded admirably with the deportment of his hosts. A hasty but searching glance sufficed to tell him that, though Uncas still remained where he had left him, David had not reappeared. No other restraint was imposed on the former than the watchful looks of a young Huron, who had placed himself at hand, though an armed warrior leaned against the post that formed one side of the narrow doorway. In every other respect the captive seemed at liberty; still he was excluded from all participation in the discourse, and possessed much more of the air of some finely molded statue than a man having life and volition.

Heyward had too recently witnessed a frightful instance of the prompt punishments of the people into whose hands he had fallen to hazard an exposure by any officious boldness. He would greatly have preferred silence and meditation to speech, when a discovery of his real condition might prove so instantly fatal. Unfortunately for this prudent resolution, his entertainers appeared otherwise disposed. He had not long occupied the seat wisely taken a little in the shade when another of the elder warriors, who spoke the French language, addressed him—

"My Canada father does not forget his children," said the chief; "I thank him. An evil spirit lives in the wife of one of my young men. Can the cunning stranger frighten him away?"

Heyward possessed some knowledge of the mummery practiced among the Indians in the cases of such supposed visitations. He saw at a glance that the circumstances might possibly be improved to further his own ends. It would, therefore, have been difficult, just then, to have uttered a proposal that would have given him more satisfaction. Aware of the necessity of preserving the dignity of his imaginary character, however, he repressed his feelings, and answered with suitable mystery—

"Spirits differ; some yield to the power of wisdom, while others are too strong."

"My brother is a great medicine," said the cunning savage; "he will try?"

A gesture of assent was the answer. The Huron was content with the assurance, and resuming his pipe, he awaited the proper moment to move. The impatient Heyward, inwardly execrating the cold customs of the savages, which required such sacrifices to appearance, was fain to assume an air of indifference equal to that maintained by the chief, who was, in truth, a near relative of the afflicted woman. The minutes lingered, and the delay had seemed an hour to the adventurer in empiricism, when the Huron laid aside his pipe, and drew his robe across his breast, as if about to lead the way to the lodge of the invalid. Just then a warrior of powerful frame darkened the door, and stalking silently among the attentive group, he seated himself on one end of the low pile of brush which sustained Duncan. The latter cast an impatient look at his neighbor, and felt his flesh creep with uncontrollable horror when he found himself in actual contact with Magua.

The sudden return of this artful and dreaded chief caused a delay in the departure of the Huron. Several pipes, that had been extinguished, were lighted again, while the newcomer, without speaking a word, drew his tomahawk from his

girdle, and filling the bowl on its head, began to inhale the vapors of the weed through the hollow handle with as much indifference as if he had not been absent two weary days on a long and toilsome hunt. Ten minutes, which appeared so many ages to Duncan, might have passed in this manner; and the warriors were fairly enveloped in a cloud of white smoke before any of them spoke.

"Welcome!" one at length uttered; "has my friend found the moose?"

"The young men stagger under their burdens," returned Magua. "Let 'Reed-that-bends' go on the hunting-path; he will meet them."

A deep and awful silence succeeded the utterance of the forbidden name. Each pipe dropped from the lips of its owner as though all had inhaled an impurity at the same instant. The smoke wreathed above their heads in little eddies, and curling in a spiral form, it ascended swiftly through the opening in the roof of the lodge, leaving the place beneath clear of its fumes, and each dark visage distinctly visible. The looks of most of the warriors were riveted on the earth; though a few of the younger and less gifted of the party suffered their wild and glaring eye-balls to roll in the direction of a white-headed savage, who sat between two of the most venerated chiefs of the tribe. There was nothing in the air or attire of this Indian that would seem to entitle him to such a distinction. The former was rather depressed, than remarkable for the bearing of the natives; and the latter was such as was commonly worn by the ordinary men of the nation. Like most around him, for more than a minute his look too was on the ground; but, trusting his eyes at length to steal a glance aside, he perceived he was becoming an object of general attention. Then he arose and lifted his voice in the general silence.

"It was a lie," he said; "I had no son. He who was called by that name is forgotten; his blood was pale, and it came not from the veins of a Huron; the wicked Chippewas cheated my squaw. The Great Spirit has said that the family of Wiss-en-

tush should end—he is happy who knows that the evil of his race dies with himself. I have done.”

The speaker, who was the father of the recreant young Indian, looked round and about him, as if seeking commendation of his stoicism in the eyes of his auditors. But the stern customs of his people had made too severe an exaction of the feeble old man. The expression of his eye contradicted his figurative and boastful language, while every muscle in his wrinkled visage was working with anguish. Standing a single minute to enjoy his bitter triumph, he turned away as if sickening at the gaze of men, and veiling his face in his blanket, he walked from the lodge with the noiseless step of an Indian, seeking in the privacy of his own abode the sympathy of one like himself, aged, forlorn, and childless.

The Indians, who believe in the hereditary transmission of virtues and defects in character, suffered him to depart in silence. Then, with an elevation of breeding that many in a more cultivated state of society might profitably emulate, one of the chiefs drew the attention of the young men from the weakness they had just witnessed, by saying in a cheerful voice, addressing himself in courtesy to Magua, as the newest comer—

“The Delawares have been like bears after the honeypots, prowling around my village. But who has ever found a Huron asleep?”

The darkness of the impending cloud which precedes a burst of thunder was not blacker than the brow of Magua as he exclaimed—

“The Delawares of the Lakes!”

“Not so. They who wear the petticoats of squaws on their own river. One of them has been passing the tribe.”

“Did my young men take his scalp?”

“His legs were good, though his arm is better for the hoe than the tomahawk,” returned the other, pointing to the immovable form of Uncas.

Instead of manifesting any womanish curiosity to feast his eyes with the sight of a captive from a people he was known to have so much reason to hate, Magua

continued to smoke, with the meditative air that he usually maintained when there was no immediate call on his cunning or his eloquence. Although secretly amazed at the facts communicated by the speech of the aged father, he permitted himself to ask no questions, reserving his inquiries for a more suitable moment. It was only after a sufficient interval that he shook the ashes from his pipe, replaced the tomahawk, tightened his girdle, and arose, casting for the first time a glance in the direction of the prisoner, who stood a little behind him. The wary though seemingly abstracted Uncas caught a glimpse of the movement, and turning suddenly to the light their looks met. Near a minute these two bold and untamed spirits stood regarding one another steadily in the eye, neither quailing in the least before the fierce gaze he encountered. The form of Uncas dilated, and his nostrils opened like those of a tiger at bay; but so rigid and unyielding was his posture that he might easily have been converted by the imagination into an exquisite and faultless representation of the warlike deity of his tribe. The lineaments of the quivering features of Magua proved more ductile; his countenance gradually lost its character of defiance in an expression of ferocious joy, and heaving a breath from the very bottom of his chest he pronounced aloud the formidable name of—

“*Le Cerf agile!*”

Each warrior sprang upon his feet at the utterance of the well-known appellation, and there was a short period during which the stoical constancy of the natives was completely conquered by surprise. The hated and yet respected name was repeated as by one voice, carrying the sound even beyond the limits of the lodge. The women and children who lingered around the entrance took up the words in an echo, which was succeeded by another shrill and plaintive howl. The latter was not yet ended, when the sensation among the men had entirely abated. Each one in presence seated himself, as though ashamed of his precipitation; but it was many minutes before their meaning eyes ceased to roll towards their captive, in curious examina-

tion of a warrior who had so often proved his prowess on the best and proudest of their nation. Uncas enjoyed his victory, but was content with merely exhibiting his triumph by a quiet smile—an emblem of scorn which belongs to all time and every nation.

Magua caught the expression, and raising his arm, he shook it at the captive—the light silver ornaments attached to his bracelet rattling with the trembling agitation of the limb as, in a tone of vengeance, he exclaimed, in English—

“Mohican, you die!”

“The healing waters will never bring the dead Hurons to life,” returned Uncas, in the music of the Delawares; “the tumbling river washes their bones; their men are squaws; their women owls. Go call together the Huron dogs, that they may look upon a warrior. My nostrils are offended; they scent the blood of a coward.”

The latter allusion struck deep, and the injury rankled. Many of the Hurons understood the strange tongue in which the captive spoke, among which number was Magua. This cunning savage beheld, and instantly profited by his advantage. Dropping the light robe of skin from his shoulder, he stretched forth his arm, and commenced a burst of his dangerous and artful eloquence. However much his influence among his people had been impaired by his occasional and besetting weakness, as well as by his desertion of the tribe, his courage and his fame as an orator were undeniable. He never spoke without auditors, and rarely without making converts to his opinions. On the present occasion, his native powers were stimulated by the thirst of revenge.

He again recounted the events of the attack on the Island at Glenn’s; the death of his associates; and the escape of their most formidable enemies. Then he described the nature and position of the mount whither he had led such captives as had fallen into their hands. Of his own bloody intentions towards the maidens, and of his baffled malice he made no mention, but passed rapidly on to the surprise of the party by “*La longue Carabine*,”

and its fatal termination. Here he paused and looked about him, in affected veneration for the departed, but, in truth, to note the effect of his opening narrative. As usual, every eye was riveted on his face. Each dusky figure seemed a breathing statue, so motionless was the posture, so intense the attention of the individual.

Then Magua dropped his voice, which had hitherto been clear, strong and elevated, and touched upon the merits of the dead. No quality that was likely to command the sympathy of an Indian escaped his notice. One had never been known to follow the chase in vain; another had been indefatigable on the trail of their enemies. This was brave, that generous. In short, he so managed his allusions that in a nation which was composed of so few families he contrived to strike every chord that might find, in its turn, some breast in which to vibrate.

“Are the bones of my young men,” he concluded, “in the burial-place of the Hurons? You know they are not. Their spirits are gone towards the setting sun, and are already crossing the great waters, to the happy hunting-grounds. But they departed without food, without guns or knives, without moccasins, naked and poor as they were born. Shall this be? Are their souls to enter the land of the just like hungry Iroquois or unmanly Delawares? Or shall they meet their friends with arms in their hands and robes on their backs? What will our fathers think the tribes of the Wyandots have become? They will look on their children with a dark eye and say, Go; a Chippewa has come hither with the name of a Huron. Brothers, we must not forget the dead, a red-skin never ceases to remember. We will load the back of this Mohican until he staggers under our bounty, and dispatch him after my young men. They call to us for aid, though our ears are not open; they say, Forget us not. When they see the spirit of this Mohican toiling after them with his burden, they will know we are of that mind. Then will they go on happy; and our children will say, ‘So did our fathers to their friends, so must we do to them.’ What is a Yengee? We have

slain many, but the earth is still pale. A stain on the name of a Huron can only be hid by blood that comes from the veins of an Indian. Let this Delaware die."

The effect of such an harangue, delivered in the nervous language and with the emphatic manner of a Huron orator, could scarcely be mistaken. Magua had so artfully blended the natural sympathies with the religious superstition of his auditors, that their minds, already prepared by custom to sacrifice a victim to the manes of their countrymen, lost every vestige of humanity in a wish for revenge. One warrior in particular, a man of wild and ferocious mien, had been conspicuous for the attention he had given to the words of the speaker. His countenance had changed with each passing emotion, until it settled into a look of deadly malice. As Magua ended he arose, and uttering the yell of a demon, his polished little axe was seen glancing in the torchlight as he whirled it above his head. The motion and the cry were too sudden for words to interrupt his bloody intention. It appeared as if a bright gleam shot from his hand, which was crossed at the same moment by a dark and powerful line. The former was the tomahawk in its passage; the latter the arm that Magua darted forward to divert its aim. The quick and ready motion of the chief was not entirely too late. The keen weapon cut the war-plume from the scalping tuft of Uncas, and passed through the frail wall of the lodge as though it were hurled from some formidable engine.

Duncan had seen the threatening action, and sprang upon his feet, with a heart which, while it leaped into his throat, swelled with the most generous resolution in behalf of his friend. A glance told him that the blow failed, and terror changed to admiration. Uncas stood still, looking his enemy in the eye with features that seemed superior to emotion. Marble could not be colder, calmer, or steadier than the countenance he put upon this sudden and vindictive attack. Then, as if pitying a want of skill which had proved so fortunate to himself, he smiled, and muttered

a few words of contempt in his own tongue.

"No!" said Magua, after satisfying himself of the safety of the captive; "the sun must shine on his shame; the squaws must see his flesh tremble, or our revenge will be like the play of boys. Go—take him where there is silence; let us see if a Delaware can sleep at night, and in the morning die."

The young men whose duty it was to guard the prisoner instantly passed their ligaments of bark across his arms and led him from the lodge, amid a profound and ominous silence. It was only as the figure of Uncas stood in the opening of the door that his firm step hesitated. There he turned, and in the sweeping and haughty glance that he threw around the circle of his enemies Duncan caught a look which he was glad to construe into an expression that he was not entirely deserted by hope.

Magua was content with his success, or too much occupied with his secret purposes to push his inquiries any further. Shaking his mantle and folding it on his bosom, he also quitted the place, without pursuing a subject which might have proved so fatal to the individual at his elbow. Notwithstanding his rising resentment, his natural firmness and his anxiety on behalf of Uncas, Heyward felt sensibly relieved by the absence of so dangerous and so subtle a foe. The excitement produced by the speech gradually subsided. The warriors resumed their seats, and clouds of smoke once more filled the lodge. For near half an hour not a syllable was uttered or scarcely a look cast aside—a grave and meditative silence being the ordinary succession to every scene of violence and commotion amongst those beings, who were alike so impetuous and yet so self-restrained.

When the chief who had solicited the aid of Duncan finished his pipe he made a final and successful movement towards departing. A motion of a finger was the intimation he gave the supposed physician to follow, and passing through the clouds of smoke, Duncan was glad, on more accounts than one, to be able at

last to breathe the pure air of a cool and refreshing summer evening.

Instead of pursuing his way among those lodges where Heyward had already made his unsuccessful search, his companion turned aside, and proceeded directly towards the base of an adjacent mountain, which overhung the temporary village. A thicket of brush skirted its foot, and it became necessary to proceed through a crooked and narrow path. The boys had resumed their sports in the clearing, and were enacting a mimic chase to the post among themselves. In order to render their games as like the reality as possible, one of the boldest of their number had conveyed a few brands into some piles of tree tops that had hitherto escaped the burning. The blaze of one of these fires lighted the way of the chief and Duncan, and gave a character of additional wildness to the rude scenery. At a little distance from a bald rock, and directly in its front, they entered a grassy opening, which they prepared to cross. Just then fresh fuel was added to the fire, and a powerful light penetrated even to that distant spot. It fell upon the white surface of the mountain and was reflected downwards upon a dark and mysterious-looking being that arose unexpectedly in their path.

The Indian paused, as if doubtful whether to proceed, and permitted his companion to approach his side. A large black ball, which at first seemed stationary, now began to move in a manner that to the latter was inexplicable. Again the fire brightened, and its glare fell more distinctly on the object. Then, even Duncan knew it—by its restless and side-lining attitudes, which kept the upper part of its form in constant motion while the animal itself appeared seated—to be a bear. Though it growled loudly and fiercely, and there were instants when its glistening eyeballs might be seen, it gave no other indications of hostility. The Huron, at least, seemed assured that the intentions of this singular intruder were peaceable, for, after giving it an attentive examination, he quietly pursued his course.

Duncan, who knew that the animal was often domesticated among the Indians, followed the example of his companion, believing that some favorite of the tribe had found its way into the thicket in search of food. They passed it unmolested. Though obliged to come nearly in contact with the monster, the Huron, who had at first so warily determined the character of his strange visitor, was now content with proceeding without wasting a moment in further examination; but Heyward was unable to prevent his eyes from looking backward in salutary watchfulness against attacks in the rear. His uneasiness was in no degree diminished when he perceived the beast rolling along their path and following their footsteps. He would have spoken, but the Indian at that moment shoved aside a door of bark and entered a cavern in the bosom of the mountain.

Profiting by so easy a method of retreat Duncan stepped after him, and was gladly closing the slight cover to the opening when he felt it drawn from his hand by the beast, whose shaggy form immediately darkened the passage. They were now in a straight and long gallery, in a chasm of the rocks, where retreat without encountering the animal was impossible. Making the best of the circumstances the young man pressed forward, keeping as close as possible to his conductor. The bear growled frequently at his heels, and once or twice its enormous paws were laid on his person, as if disposed to prevent his further passage into the den.

How long the nerves of Heyward would have sustained him in this extraordinary situation, it might be difficult to decide, for happily, he soon found relief. A glimmer of light had constantly been in their front, and they now arrived at the place whence it proceeded.

A large cavity in the rock had been rudely fitted to answer the purposes of many apartments. The subdivisions were simple but ingenious, being composed of stone, sticks and bark intermingled. Openings above admitted the light by day, and at night fires and torches supplied the place of the sun. Hither the Hurons had brought most of their valuables, especially

those which more particularly pertained to the nation; and hither, as it now appeared, the sick woman, who was believed to be the victim of supernatural power, had been transported also, under an impression that her tormentor would find more difficulty in making his assaults through walls of stone than through the leafy coverings of the lodges. The apartment into which Duncan and his guide first entered had been devoted exclusively to her accommodation. The latter approached her bedside, which was surrounded by females, in the center of whom Heyward was surprised to find his missing friend David.

A single look was sufficient to apprise the pretended leech that the invalid was far beyond his powers of healing. She lay in a sort of paralysis, indifferent to the objects which crowded before her sight, and happily unconscious of suffering. Heyward was far from regretting that his nummeries were to be performed on one who was much too ill to take an interest in their failure or success. The slight qualm of conscience which had been excited by the intended deception was instantly appeased, and he began to collect his thoughts in order to enact his part with suitable spirit, when he found he was about to be anticipated in his skill by an attempt to prove the power of music.

Gamut, who had stood prepared to pour forth his spirit in song when the visitors entered, after delaying a moment, drew a strain from his pipe, and commenced a hymn that might have worked a miracle, had faith in its efficacy been of much avail. He was allowed to proceed to the close, the Indians respecting his imaginary infirmity, and Duncan too glad of the delay to hazard the slightest interruption. As the dying cadence of his strains was falling on the ears of the latter, he started aside at hearing them repeated behind him, in a voice half human and half sepulchral. Looking round, he beheld the shaggy monster seated on end in a shadow of the cavern, where, while his restless body swung in the uneasy manner of the animal, it repeated, in a sort of low growl, sounds, if not words, which

bore some slight resemblance to the melody of the singer.

The effect of so strange an echo on David may better be imagined than described. His eyes opened as if he doubted their truth; and his voice became instantly mute in excess of wonder. A deep-laid scheme of communicating some important intelligence to Heyward was driven from his recollection by an emotion which very nearly resembled fear, but which he was fain to believe was admiration. Under its influence, he exclaimed aloud—"She expects you and is at hand;" and precipitately left the cavern.

CHAPTER XXV.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quince. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

THERE was a strange blending of the ridiculous with that which was solemn in this scene. The beast still continued its rolling, and apparently untiring movements, though its ludicrous attempt to imitate the melody of David ceased the instant the latter abandoned the field. The words of Gamut were, as has been seen, in his native tongue; and to Duncan they seemed pregnant with some hidden meaning, though nothing present assisted him in discovering the object of their allusion. A speedy end was, however, put to every conjecture on the subject by the manner of the chief, who advanced to the bedside of the invalid, and beckoned away the whole group of female attendants that had clustered there to witness the skill of the stranger. He was implicitly, though reluctantly, obeyed; and when the low echo which rang along the hollow, natural gallery, from the distant closing door, had ceased, pointing towards his insensible daughter, he said—

"Now, let my brother show his power."

Thus unequivocally called on to exercise the functions of his assumed character, Heyward was apprehensive that the smallest delay might prove dangerous.

Endeavoring then to collect his ideas, he prepared to perform that species of incantation, and those uncouth rites under which the Indian conjurers are accustomed to conceal their ignorance and impotency. It is more than probable that, in the disordered state of his thoughts, he would soon have fallen into some suspicious if not fatal error, had not his incipient attempts been interrupted by a fierce growl from the quadruped. Three several times did he renew his efforts to proceed, and as often was he met by the same unaccountable opposition, each interruption seeming more savage and threatening than the preceding.

"The cunning ones are jealous," said the Huron; "I go, brother, the woman is the wife of one of my bravest young men; deal justly by her. Peace!" he added, beckoning to the discontented beast to be quiet; "I go."

The chief was as good as his word, and Duncan now found himself alone in that wild and desolate abode, with the helpless invalid, and the fierce and dangerous brute. The latter listened to the movements of the Indian with that air of sagacity that a bear is known to possess until another echo announced that he had also left the cavern, when it turned and came waddling up to Duncan, before whom it seated itself, in its natural attitude, erect like a man. The youth looked anxiously about him for some weapon with which he might make a resistance against the attack he now seriously expected.

It seemed, however, as if the humor of the animal had suddenly changed. Instead of continuing its discontented growls, or manifesting any further signs of anger, the whole of its shaggy body shook violently, as if agitated by some strange internal convulsion. The huge and unwieldy talons pawed stupidly about the grinning muzzle, and while Heyward kept his eyes riveted on its movements with jealous watchfulness, the grim head fell on one side, and in its place appeared the honest, sturdy countenance of the scout, who was indulging, from the bottom of his soul, in his own peculiar expression of merriment.

"Hist!" said the wary woodsman, interrupting Heyward's exclamation of surprise; "the varlets are about the place, and any sounds that are not natural to witchcraft would bring them back upon us in a body."

"Tell me the meaning of this masquerade, and why you have attempted so desperate an adventure?"

"Ah! reason and calculation are often outdone by accident," returned the scout. "But as a story should always commence at the beginning, I will tell you the whole in order. After we parted I placed the commandant and the Sagamore in an old beaver lodge, where they are safer from the Hurons than they would be in the garrison of Edward; for your high northwest Indians, not having as yet got the traders among them, continue to venerate the beaver. After which Uncas and I pushed for the other encampment, as was agreed; have you seen the lad?"

"To my great grief!—he is a captive, and condemned to die at the rising of the sun."

"I had misgivings that such would be his fate," resumed the scout, in a less confident and joyous tone. But soon regaining his naturally firm voice again, he continued—"His bad fortune is the true reason of my being here, for it would never do to abandon such a boy to the Hurons. A rare time the knaves would have of it, could they tie 'The bounding Elk' and 'The long Carabine,' as they call me, to the same stake! Though why they have given me such a name I never knew, there being as little likeness between the gifts of 'Kill-deer' and the performance of one of your real Canada carabines, as there is between the nature of a pipe-stone and a flint!"

"Keep to your tale," said the impatient Heyward; "we know not at what moment the Hurons may return."

"No fear of them. A conjurer must have his time, like a straggling priest in the settlements. We are as safe from interruption as a missionary would be at the beginning of a two hours' discourse. Well, Uncas and I fell in with a return party of the varlets; the lad was much too for-

ward for a scout; nay, for that matter, being of hot blood, he was not so much to blame; and, after all, one of the Hurons proved a coward, and in fleeing led him into an ambushment."

"And dearly has he paid for the weakness!"

The scout significantly passed his hand across his own throat and nodded, as if he said, "I comprehend your meaning." After which he continued, in a more audible though scarcely more intelligible language—

"After the loss of the boy I turned upon the Hurons, as you may judge. There have been scrimmages atween one or two of their outlyers and myself; but that is neither here nor there. So, after I had shot the imps, I got in pretty nigh to the lodges without further commotion. Then what should luck do in my favor but lead me to the very spot where one of the most famous conjurers of the tribe was dressing himself, as I well knew, for some great battle with Satan—though why should I call that luck, which it now seems was an especial ordering from Providence. So a judgmatical rap over the head stiffened the lying impostor for a time, and leaving him a bit of walnut for his supper, to prevent an uproar, and stringing him up atween two saplings, I made free with his finery, and took a part of the bear on myself, in order that the operations might proceed."

"And admirably did you enact the character; the animal itself might have been shamed by the representation."

"Lord, major," returned the flattered woodsman; "I should be but a poor scholar for one who has studied so long in the wilderness did I not know how to set forth the movements and natur' of such a beast. Had it been now a catamount or even a full-sized panther, I would have embellished a performance for you worth regarding. But it is no such marvelous feat to exhibit the feats of so dull a beast; though, for that matter, too, a bear may be overacted. Yes, yes; it is not every imitator that knows natur' may be outdone easier than she is

equaled. But all our work is yet before us. Where is the gentle one?"

"Heaven knows; I have examined every lodge in the village without discovering the slightest trace of her presence in the tribe."

"You heard what the singer said as he left us—'She is at hand, and expects you.'"

"I have been compelled to believe he alluded to this unhappy woman."

"The simpleton was frightened, and blundered through his message; but he had a deeper meaning. Here are walls enough to separate the whole settlement. A bear ought to climb; therefore will I take a look above them. There may be honey-pots hid in these rocks, and I am a beast, you know, that has a hankering for the sweets."

The scout looked behind him, laughing at his own conceit, while he clambered up the partition, imitating, as he went, the clumsy motions of the beast he represented; but the instant the summit was gained he made a gesture for silence, and slid down with the utmost precipitation.

"She is here," he whispered, "and by that door you will find her. I would have spoken a word of comfort to the afflicted soul; but the sight of such a monster might upset her reason. Though for that matter, major, you are none of the most inviting yourself in your paint."

Duncan, who had already sprung eagerly forward, drew instantly back on hearing these discouraging words.

"Am I, then, so very revolting?" he demanded with an air of chagrin.

"You might not startle a wolf, or turn the Royal Americans from a charge; but I have seen the time when you had a better-favored look. Your streaked countenances are not ill-judged of by the squaws, but young women of white blood give the preference to their own color. See," he added, pointing to a place where the water trickled from a rock, forming a little crystal spring before it found an issue through an adjacent crevice; "you may easily get rid of the Sagamore's daub, and when you come back I will try my hand at a new embellishment. It's as

common for a conjurer to alter his paint as for a buck in the settlements to change his finery."

The deliberate woodsman had little occasion to hunt for arguments to enforce his advice. He was yet speaking when Duncan availed himself of the water. In a moment every frightful or offensive mark was obliterated, and the youth appeared again in the lineaments with which he had been gifted by nature. Thus prepared for an interview with his mistress, he took a hasty leave of his companion, and disappeared through the indicated passage. The scout witnessed his departure with complacency, nodding his head after him, and muttering his good wishes; after which he very coolly set about an examination of the state of the larder, among the Hurons—the cavern, among other purposes, being used as a receptacle for the fruits of their hunts.

Duncan had no other guide than a distant glimmering light, which served, however, the office of a polar star to the lover. By its aid he was able to enter the haven of his hopes, which was merely another apartment of the cavern, that had been solely appropriated to the safe-keeping of so important a prisoner as a daughter of the commandant of William Henry. It was profusely strewn with the plunder of that unlucky fortress. In the midst of this confusion he found her he sought, pale, anxious, and terrified, but lovely. David had prepared her for such a visit.

"Duncan!" she exclaimed, in a voice that seemed to tremble at the sounds created by himself.

"Alice!" he answered, leaping carelessly among trunks, boxes, arms, and furniture, until he stood at her side.

"I knew you would never desert me," she said, looking up with a momentary glow on her otherwise dejected countenance. "But you are alone! grateful as it is to be thus remembered, I could wish to think you are not entirely alone."

Duncan observing that she trembled in a manner which betrayed her inability to stand, gently induced her to be seated,

while he recounted those leading incidents which it has been our task to record. Alice listened with breathless interest; and though the young man touched lightly on the sorrows of the stricken father, taking care, however, not to wound the self-love of his auditor, the tears ran as freely down the cheeks of the daughter as though she had never wept before. The soothing tenderness of Duncan, however, soon quieted the first burst of her emotions, and she then heard him to the close with undivided attention, if not with composure.

"And now, Alice," he added, "you will see how much is still expected of you. By the assistance of our experienced and invaluable friend, the scout, we may find our way from this savage people, but you will have to exert your utmost fortitude. Remember that you fly to the arms of your venerable parent, and how much his happiness, as well as your own, depends on those exertions."

"Can I do otherwise for a father who has done so much for me?"

"And for me too," continued the youth, gently pressing the hand he held in both his own.

The look of innocence and surprise which he received in return convinced Duncan of the necessity of being more explicit.

"This is neither the place nor the occasion to detain you with selfish wishes," he added; "but what heart loaded like mine would not wish to cast its burden? They say misery is the closest of all ties; our common suffering in your behalf left but little to be explained between your father and myself."

"And dearest Cora, Duncan; surely, Cora was not forgotten?"

"Not forgotten! no; regretted, as woman was seldom mourned before. Your venerable father knew no difference between his children; but I—Alice, you will not be offended when I say that, to me, her worth was in a degree obscured——"

"Then you knew not the merit of my sister," said Alice, withdrawing her hand; "of you she ever speaks as of one who is her dearest friend."

"I would gladly believe her such," re-

turned Duncan, hastily; "I could wish her to be even more; but with you, Alice, I have the permission of your father to aspire to a still nearer and dearer tie."

Alice trembled violently, and there was an instant during which she bent her face aside, yielding to the emotions common to her sex; but they quickly passed away, leaving her mistress of her deportment, if not of her affections.

"Heyward," she said, looking him full in the face with a touching expression of innocence and dependency, "give me the sacred presence and the holy sanction of that parent before you urge me further."

"Though more I should not, less I could not say," the youth was about to answer, when he was interrupted by a light tap on his shoulder. Starting to his feet he turned and confronting the intruder, his looks fell on the dark form and malignant visage of Magua. The deep, guttural laugh of the savage sounded, at such a moment, to Duncan like the hellish taunt of a demon. Had he pursued the sudden and fierce impulse of the instant, he would have cast himself on the Huron, and committed their fortunes to the issue of a deadly struggle. But, without arms of any description, ignorant of what succor his subtle enemy could command, and charged with the safety of one who was just then dearer than ever to his heart, he no sooner entertained than he abandoned the desperate intention.

"What is your purpose?" said Alice, meekly folding her arms on her bosom, and struggling to conceal an agony of apprehension in behalf of Heyward in the usual cold and distant manner with which she received the visits of her captor.

The exulting Indian had resumed his austere countenance, though he drew warily back before the menacing glance of the young man's fiery eye. He regarded both his captives for a moment with a steady look, and then stepping aside, he dropped a log of wood across a door different from that by which Duncan had entered. The latter now comprehended the manner of his surprise, and believing himself irretrievably lost, he drew Alice to his bosom, and stood pre-

pared to meet a fate which he hardly regretted; since it was to be suffered in such company. But Magua meditated no immediate violence. His first measures were very evidently taken to secure his new captive; nor did he even bestow a second glance at the motionless form in the center of the cavern until he had completely cut off every hope of retreat through the private outlet he had himself used. He was watched in all his movements by Heyward, who, however, remained firm, still holding the fragile form of Alice to the heart, at once too proud and too hopeless to ask favor of an enemy so often foiled. When Magua had effected his object he approached his prisoners, and said in English—

"The pale-faces trap the cunning beavers; but the red-skins know how to take the Yengeese."

"Huron, do your worst!" exclaimed the excited Heyward, forgetful that a double stake was involved in his life; "you and your vengeance are alike despised."

"Will the white man speak these words at the stake?" asked Magua, manifesting at the same time how little faith he had in the other's resolution by the sneer that accompanied his words.

"Here, singly to your face, or in the presence of your nation!"

"Le Renard Subtil is a great chief," returned the Indian; "he will go and bring his young men, to see how bravely a pale-face can laugh at the tortures."

He turned away while speaking, and was about to leave the place through the avenue by which Duncan had approached, when a growl caught his ear and caused him to hesitate. The figure of the bear appeared in the door, where it sat, rolling from side to side in its customary restlessness. Magua, like the father of the sick woman, eyed it keenly for a moment, as if to ascertain its character. He was far above the more vulgar superstitions of his tribe, and so soon as he recognized the well-known attire of the conjurer he prepared to pass it in cool contempt. But a louder and more threatening growl caused him again to pause. Then he seemed as

if suddenly resolved to trifle no longer, and moved resolutely forward. The mimic animal, which had advanced a little, retired slowly in his front, until it arrived again at the pass, when, rearing on its hinder legs, it beat the air with its paws, in the manner practiced by its brutal prototype.

"Fool!" exclaimed the chief, in Huron, "go play with the children and squaws; leave men to their wisdom."

He once more endeavored to pass the supposed empiric, scorning even the parade of threatening to use the knife, or tomahawk, that was pendent from his belt. Suddenly the beast extended its arms, or rather legs, and enclosed him in a grasp that might have vied with the far-famed power of the bear's "hug" itself. Heyward had watched the whole procedure, on the part of Hawkeye, with breathless interest. At first he relinquished his hold of Alice; then he caught up a thong of buckskin, which had been used around some bundle, and when he beheld his enemy with his two arms pinned to his side by the iron muscles of the scout, he rushed upon him, and effectually secured them there. Arms, legs, and feet were encircled in twenty folds of the thong in less time than we have taken to record the circumstance. When the formidable Huron was completely pinioned, the scout released his hold, and Duncan laid his enemy on his back, utterly helpless.

Throughout the whole of this sudden and extraordinary operation Magua, though he had struggled violently, until assured he was in the hands of one whose nerves were far better strung than his own, had not uttered the slightest exclamation. But when Hawkeye, by way of making a summary explanation of his conduct, removed the shaggy jaws of the beast, and exposed his own rugged and earnest countenance to the gaze of the Huron, the philosophy of the latter was so far mastered as to permit him to utter the never failing—

"Hug!"

"Ay! you've found your tongue," said his undisturbed conqueror; "now,

in order that you shall not use it to our ruin, I must make free to stop your mouth."

As there was no time to be lost, the scout immediately set about effecting so necessary a precaution; and when he had gagged the Indian, his enemy might safely have been considered as "hors de combat."

"By what place did the imp enter?" asked the industrious scout, when his work was ended. "Not a soul has passed my way since you left me."

Duncan pointed out the door by which Magua had come, and which now presented too many obstacles to a quick retreat.

"Bring on the gentle one, then," continued his friend; "we must make a push for the woods by the other outlet."

"'Tis impossible!" said Duncan; "fear has overcome her, and she is helpless. Alice! my sweet, my own Alice, arouse yourself! now is the moment to fly. 'Tis in vain! she hears, but is unable to follow. Go, noble and worthy friend; save yourself, and leave me to my fate!"

"Every trail has its end, and every calamity brings its lesson," returned the scout. "There, wrap her in them Indian cloths. Conceal all of her little form. Nay, that foot has no fellow in the wilderness; it will betray her. All, every part. Now take her in your arms, and follow. Leave the rest to me."

Duncan, as may be gathered from the words of his companion, was eagerly obeying; and as the other finished speaking he took the light person of Alice in his arms and followed on the footsteps of the scout. They found the sick woman as they had left her, still alone, and passed swiftly on, by the natural gallery, to the place of entrance. As they approached the little door of bark, a murmur of voices without announced that the friends and relatives of the invalid were gathered about the place, patiently awaiting a summons to re-enter.

"If I open my lips to speak," Hawkeye whispered, "my English, which is the genuine tongue of a white-skin, will tell the varlets that an enemy is among them.

You must give 'em your jargon, major; and say that we have shut the evil spirit in the cave and are taking the woman to the woods in order to find strengthening roots. Practice all your cunning, for it is a lawful undertaking."

The door opened a little, as if one without was listening to the proceedings within, and compelled the scout to cease his directions. A fierce growl repelled the eavesdropper, and then the scout boldly threw open the covering of bark and left the place, enacting the character of the bear as he proceeded. Duncan kept close at his heels, and soon found himself in the center of a cluster of twenty anxious relatives and friends.

The crowd fell back a little and permitted the father and one who appeared to be the husband of the woman to approach.

"Has my brother driven away the evil spirit?" demanded the former. "What has he in his arms?"

"Thy child," returned Duncan, gravely; "the disease has gone out of her; it is shut up in the rocks. I take the woman to a distance, where I will strengthen her against any further attacks. She shall be in the wigwam of the young man when the sun comes again."

When the father had translated the meaning of the stranger's words into the Huron language, a suppressed murmur announced the satisfaction with which this intelligence was received. The chief himself waved his hand for Duncan to proceed, saying aloud; in a firm voice, and with a lofty manner—

"Go—I am a man, and I will enter the rock and fight the wicked one."

Heyward had gladly obeyed, and was already past the little group, when these startling words arrested him.

"Is my brother mad!" he exclaimed; "is he cruel! He will meet the disease and it will enter him; or he will drive out the disease and it will chase his daughter into the woods. No—let my children wait without, and if the spirit appears beat him down with clubs. He is cunning, and will bury himself in the mountain when he sees how many are ready to fight him."

This singular warning had the desired

effect. Instead of entering the cavern the father and husband drew their tomahawks and posted themselves in readiness to deal their vengeance on the imaginary tormentor of their sick relative, while the women and children broke branches from the bushes or seized fragments of the rock with a similar intention. At this favorable moment the counterfeit conjurers disappeared.

Hawkeye, at the same time that he had presumed so far on the nature of the Indian superstitions, was not ignorant that they were rather tolerated than relied on by the wisest of the chiefs. He well knew the value of time in the present emergency. Whatever might be the extent of the self-delusions of his enemies, and however it had tended to assist his schemes, the slightest cause of suspicion, acting on the subtle nature of an Indian, would be likely to prove fatal. Taking the path, therefore, that was most likely to avoid observation, he rather skirted than entered the village. The warriors were still to be seen in the distance, by the fading light of the fires, stalking from lodge to lodge. But the children had abandoned their sports for their beds of skin, and the quiet of night was already beginning to prevail over the turbulence and excitement of so busy and important an evening.

Alice revived under the renovating influence of the open air, and as her physical rather than her mental powers had been the subject of weakness, she stood in no need of any explanation of that which had occurred.

"Now let me make an effort to walk," she said, when they had entered the forest, blushing, though unseen, that she had not been sooner able to quit the arms of Duncan; "I am indeed restored."

"Nay, Alice, you are yet too weak."

The maiden struggled gently to release herself, and Heyward was compelled to part with his precious burden. The representative of the bear had certainly been an entire stranger to the delicious emotions of the lover while his arms encircled his mistress; and he was, perhaps, a stranger also to the nature of that feeling of ingenuous shame that oppressed the

trembling Alice. But when he found himself at a suitable distance from the lodges, he made a halt, and spoke on a subject of which he was thoroughly the master.

"This path will lead you to the brook," he said; "follow its northern bank until you come to a fall; mount the hill on your right, and you will see the fires of the other people. There you must go and demand protection; if they are true Delawares you will be safe. A distant flight with that gentle one just now is impossible. The Hurons would follow up our trail and master our scalps before we had got a dozen miles. Go, and Providence be with you."

"And you!" demanded Heyward in surprise; "surely we part not here?"

"The Hurons hold the pride of the Delawares; the last of the high blood of the Mohicans is in their power," returned the scout; "I go to see what can be done in his favor. Had they mastered your scalp, major, a knave should have fallen for every hair it held, as I promised; but if the young Sagamore is to be led to the stake, the Indians shall see, also, how a man without a cross can die."

Not in the least offended with the decided preference that the sturdy woodsman gave to one who might, in some degree, be called the child of his adoption, Duncan still continued to urge such reasons against so desperate an effort as presented themselves. He was aided by Alice, who mingled her entreaties with those of Heyward that he would abandon a resolution that promised so much danger, with so little hope of success. Their eloquence and ingenuity were expended in vain. The scout heard them attentively but impatiently, and finally closed the discussion by answering in a tone that instantly silenced Alice, while it told Heyward how fruitless any further remonstrances would be.

"I have heard," he said, "that there is a feeling in youth which binds man to woman closer than the father is tied to the son. It may be so. I have seldom been where women of my color dwell; but such may be the gifts of nature in the set-

tlements. You have risked life and all that is dear to you to bring off this gentle one, and I suppose that some such disposition is at the bottom of it all. As for me, I taught the lad the real character of a rifle; and well has he paid me for it. I have fought at his side in many a bloody scrimmage; and so long as I could hear the crack of his piece in one ear and that of the Sagamore in the other, I knew no enemy was on my back. Winters and summers, nights and days, have we roved the wilderness in company, eating of the same dish, one sleeping while the other watched; and afore it shall be said that Uncas was taken to the torment, and I at hand—There is but a single ruler of us all, whatever may be the color of the skin; and him I call to witness—that before the Mohican boy shall perish for the want of a friend, good faith shall depart the 'arth and 'Kill-deer' become as harmless as the tooting we'pon of the singer!"

Duncan released his hold on the arm of the scout, who turned and steadily retraced his steps towards the lodges. After pausing a moment to gaze at his retiring form, the successful and yet sorrowful Heyward and Alice took their way together towards the distant village of the Delawares.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Bot. Let me play the lion, too.

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

NOTWITHSTANDING the high resolution of Hawkeye, he fully comprehended all the difficulties and dangers he was about to incur. In his return to the camp his acute and practiced intellects were intently engaged in devising means to counteract a watchfulness and suspicion on the part of his enemies that he knew were in no degree inferior to his own. Nothing but the color of his skin had saved the lives of Magua and the conjurer, who would have been the first victims sacrificed to his own security, had not the scout believed such an act, however congenial it might be to the nature of an Indian, utterly unworthy of one who boasted a descent from men

that knew no cross of blood. Accordingly he trusted to the withes and ligaments with which he had bound his captives, and pursued his way directly towards the center of the lodges.

As he approached the buildings his steps became more deliberate, and his vigilant eye suffered no sign, whether friendly or hostile, to escape him. A neglected hut was a little in advance of the others and appeared as if it had been deserted when half completed—most probably on account of failing in some of the more important requisites, such as wood or water. A faint light glimmered through its cracks, however, and announced that, notwithstanding its imperfect structure, it was not without a tenant. Thither, then, the scout proceeded like a prudent general who was about to feel the advance positions of his enemy before he hazarded the main attack.

Throwing himself into a suitable posture for the beast he represented, Hawkeye crawled to a little opening, where he might command a view of the interior. It proved to be the abiding-place of David Gamut. Hither the faithful singing-master had now brought himself, together with all his sorrows, his apprehensions, and his meek dependence on the protection of Providence. At the precise moment when his ungainly person came under the observation of the scout, in the manner just mentioned, the woodsman himself, though in his assumed character, was the subject of the solitary being's profoundest reflections.

However implicit the faith of David was in the performance of ancient miracles, he eschewed the belief of any direct supernatural agency in the management of modern morality. In other words, while he had implicit faith in the ability of Balaam's ass to speak, he was somewhat skeptical on the subject of a bear's singing; and yet he had been assured of the latter on the testimony of his own exquisite organs. There was something in his air and manner that betrayed to the scout the utter confusion of the state of his mind. He was seated on a pile of brush, a few twigs from which occasion-

ally fed his low fire, with his head leaning on his arm, in a posture of melancholy musing. The costume of the votary of music had undergone no other alteration from that so lately described, except that he had covered his bald head with the triangular beaver, which had not proved sufficiently alluring to excite the cupidity of any of his captors.

The ingenious Hawkeye, who recalled the hasty manner in which the other had abandoned his post at the bedside of the sick woman, was not without his suspicions concerning the subject of so much solemn deliberation. First making the circuit of the hut, and ascertaining that it stood quite alone, and that the character of its inmate was likely to protect it from visitors, he ventured through its low door, into the very presence of Gamut. The position of the latter brought the fire between them; and when Hawkeye had seated himself on end, near a minute elapsed, during which the two remained regarding each other without speaking. The suddenness and the nature of the surprise had nearly proved too much for—we will not say the philosophy—but for the faith and resolution of David. He fumbled for his pitch-pipe, and arose with a confused intention of attempting a musical exorcism.

"Dark and mysterious monster!" he exclaimed, while with trembling hands he disposed of his auxiliary eyes, and sought his never-failing resource in trouble, the gifted version of the Psalms; "I know not your nature nor intents; but if aught you meditate against the person and rights of one of the humblest servants of the temple, listen to the inspired language of the youth of Israel, and repent."

The bear shook his shaggy sides, and then a well-known voice replied—

"Put up the tooting we'pon, and teach your throat modesty. Five words of plain and comprehensible English are worth, just now, an hour of squalling."

"What art thou?" demanded David, utterly disqualified to pursue his original intention, and nearly gasping for breath.

"A man like yourself; and one whose blood is as little tainted by the cross of a

bear or an Indian as your own. Have you so soon forgotten from whom you received the foolish instrument you hold in your hand?"

"Can these things be?" returned David, breathing more freely as the truth began to dawn upon him. "I have found many marvels during my sojourn with the heathen, but surely nothing to excel this!"

"Come, come," returned Hawkeye, uncasing his honest countenance, the better to assure the wavering confidence of his companion; "you may see a skin which, if it be not as white as one of the gentle ones, has no tinge of red to it that the winds of the heaven and the sun have not bestowed. Now let us to business."

"First, tell me of the maiden, and of the youth who so bravely sought her," interrupted David.

"Ay, they are happily freed from the tomahawks of these varlets. But can you put me on the scent of Uncas?"

"The young man is in bondage, and much I fear his death is decreed. I greatly mourn that one so well disposed should die in his ignorance, and I have sought a goodly hymn——"

"Can you lead me to him?"

"The task will not be difficult," returned David, hesitating; "though I greatly fear your presence would rather increase than mitigate his unhappy fortunes."

"No more words, but lead on," returned Hawkeye, concealing his face again, and setting the example in his own person by instantly quitting the lodge.

As they proceeded, the scout ascertained that his companion found access to Uncas, under privilege of his imaginary infirmity, aided by the favor he had acquired with one of the guards who, in consequence of speaking a little English, had been selected by David as the subject of a religious conversion. How far the Huron comprehended the intentions of his new friend, may well be doubted; but as exclusive attention is as flattering to a savage as to a more civilized individual, it had produced the effect we have mentioned. It is unnecessary to repeat the shrewd manner

with which the scout extracted these particulars from the simple David; neither shall we dwell, in this place, on the nature of the instructions he delivered, when completely master of all the necessary facts, as the whole will be sufficiently explained to the reader in the course of the narrative.

The lodge in which Uncas was confined was in the very center of the village, and in a situation, perhaps, more difficult than any other to approach, or leave, without observation. But it was not the policy of Hawkeye to affect the least concealment. Presuming on his disguise, and his ability to sustain the character he had assumed, he took the most plain and direct route to the place. The hour, however, afforded him some little of that protection which he appeared so much to despise. The boys were already deep in sleep, and all the women and most of the warriors had retired to the lodges for the night. Four or five of the latter only lingered about the door of the prison of Uncas, wary but close observers of the manner of their captive.

At the sight of Gamut, accompanied by one in the well-known masquerade of their most distinguished conjurer, they readily made way for them both. Still they betrayed no intention to depart. On the other hand, they were evidently disposed to remain bound to the place by an additional interest in the mysterious mummeries that they of course expected from such a visit.

From the total inability of the scout to address the Hurons in their own language, he was compelled to trust the conversation entirely to David. Notwithstanding the simplicity of the latter, he did ample justice to the instructions he had received, more than fulfilling the strongest hopes of his teacher.

"The Delawares are women!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to the savage who had a slight understanding of the language in which he spoke; "the Yengeese, my foolish countrymen, have told them to take up the tomahawk, and strike their fathers in the Canadas, and they have forgotten their sex. Does my brother wish to hear '*Le Cerf agile*' ask

for his petticoats, and see him weep before the Hurons at the stake?"

The exclamation "hugh," delivered in a strong tone of assent, announced the gratification the savage would receive in witnessing such an exhibition of weakness in an enemy so long hated and so much feared.

"Then let him step aside, and the cunning man will blow upon the dog! Tell it to my brothers."

The Huron explained the meaning of David to his fellows, who, in their turn, listened to the project with that sort of satisfaction that their untamed spirits might be expected to find in such a refinement in cruelty. They drew back a little from the entrance, and motioned to the supposed conjurer to enter. But the bear, instead of obeying, maintained the seat it had taken and growled.

"The cunning man is afraid that his breath will blow upon his brothers, and take away their courage too," continued David, improving the hint he had received; "they must stand further off."

The Hurons, who would have deemed such a misfortune the heaviest calamity that could befall them, fell back in a body, taking a position where they were out of earshot, though at the same time they could command a view of the entrance of the lodge. Then, as if satisfied of their safety, the scout left his position, and slowly entered the place. It was silent and gloomy, being tenanted solely by the captive, and lighted by the dying embers of a fire which had been used for the purposes of cookery.

Uncas occupied a distant corner, in a reclining attitude, being rigidly bound, both hands and feet, by strong and painful withes. When the frightful object first presented itself to the young Mohican he did not deign to bestow a single glance on the animal. The scout, who had left David at the door to ascertain they were not observed, thought it prudent to preserve his disguise until assured of their privacy. Instead of speaking, therefore, he exerted himself to enact one of the antics of the animal he represented. The young Mohican, who at first believed his

enemies had sent in a real beast to torment him and try his nerves, detected in those performances, that to Heyward appeared so accurate, certain blemishes that at once betrayed the counterfeit. Had Hawkeye been aware of the low estimation in which the more skillful Uncas held his representations he would probably have prolonged the entertainment a little in pique. But the scornful expression of the young man's eye admitted of so many constructions that the worthy scout was spared the mortification of such a discovery. As soon, therefore, as David gave the preconcerted signal a low hissing sound was heard in the lodge in place of the fierce growlings of the bear.

Uncas had cast his body back against the wall of the hut and closed his eyes, as if willing to exclude so contemptible and disagreeable an object from his sight. But the moment the noise of the serpent was heard he arose and cast his looks on each side of him, bending his head low, and turning it inquiringly in every direction, until his keen eye rested on the shaggy monster, where it remained riveted, as though fixed by the power of a charm. Again the same sounds were repeated, evidently proceeding from the mouth of the beast. Once more the eyes of the youth roamed over the interior of the lodge, and returning to their former resting-place, he uttered, in a deep, suppressed voice—

"Hawkeye!"

"Cut his bands," said Hawkeye to David, who just then approached them.

The singer did as he was ordered, and Uncas found his limbs released. At the same moment the dried skin of the animal rattled, and presently the scout arose to his feet, in proper person. The Mohican appeared to comprehend the nature of the attempt his friend had made intuitively; neither tongue nor feature betraying another symptom of surprise. When Hawkeye had cast his shaggy vestment, which was done by simply loosing certain thongs of skin, he drew a long, glittering knife, and put it in the hands of Uncas.

"The red Hurons are without," he said; "let us be ready."

At the same time he laid his finger significantly on another similar weapon, both being the fruits of his prowess among their enemies during the evening.

"We will go," said Uncas.

"Whither?"

"To the tortoises; they are the children of my grandfathers."

"Ay, lad," said the scout in English—a language he was apt to use when a little abstracted in mind; "the same blood runs in your veins, I believe; but time and distance has a little changed its color. What shall we do with the Mingoes at the door? They count six, and this singer is as good as nothing."

"The Hurons are boasters," said Uncas scornfully; "their 'totem' is a moose, and they run like snails. The Delawares are children of the tortoise, and they outstrip the deer."

"Ay, lad, there is truth in what you say; and I doubt not, on a rush, you would pass the whole nation; and in a straight race of two miles, would be in, and get your breath again, afore a knave of them all was within hearing of the other village. But the gift of a white man lies more in his arms than in his legs. As for myself, I can brain a Huron as well as a better man; but when it comes to a race, the knaves would prove too much for me."

Uncas, who had already approached the door, in readiness to lead the way, now recoiled and placed himself once more in the bottom of the lodge. But Hawkeye, who was too much occupied with his own thoughts to note the movement, continued speaking more to himself than to his companion.

"After all," he said, "it is unreasonable to keep one man in bondage to the gifts of another. So, Uncas, you had better take the leap, while I put on the skin again and trust to cunning for want of speed."

The young Mohican made no reply, but quietly folded his arms and leaned his body against one of the upright posts that supported the wall of the hut.

"Well," said the scout, looking up at him, "why do you tarry? There will be

time enough for me, as the knaves will give chase to you at first."

"Uncas will stay," was the calm reply.

"For what?"

"To fight with his father's brother, and die with the friend of the Delawares."

"Ay, lad," returned Hawkeye, squeezing the hand of Uncas between his own iron fingers; "'twould have been more like a Mingo than a Mohican had you left me. But I thought I would make the offer, seeing that youth commonly loves life. Well, what can't be done by main courage in war must be done by circumvention. Put on the skin; I doubt not you can play the bear nearly as well as myself."

Whatever might have been the private opinion of Uncas of their respective abilities in this particular, his grave countenance manifested no opinion of his own superiority. He silently and expeditiously encased himself in the covering of the beast and then awaited such other movements as his more aged companion saw fit to dictate.

"Now, friend," said Hawkeye, addressing David, "an exchange of garments will be a great convenience to you, inasmuch as you are but little accustomed to the make-shifts of the wilderness. Here, take my hunting shirt and cap, and give me your blanket and hat. You must trust me with the book and spectacles, as well as the tooter, too; if we ever meet again in better times, you shall have all back again, with many thanks into the bargain."

David parted with the several articles named with a readiness that would have done great credit to his liberality, had he not certainly profited in many particulars by the exchange. Hawkeye was not long in assuming his borrowed garments; and when his restless eyes were hid behind the glasses, and his head was surmounted by the triangular beaver, as their statues were not dissimilar, he might readily have passed for the singer by star-light. As soon as these dispositions were made the scout turned to David and gave him his parting instructions.

"Are you much given to cowardice?"

he bluntly asked, by way of obtaining a suitable understanding of the whole case before he ventured a prescription.

"My pursuits are peaceful, and my temper, I humbly trust, is greatly given to mercy and love," returned David, a little nettled at so direct an attack on his manhood; "but there are none who can say that I have ever forgotten my faith in the Lord, even in the greatest straits."

"Your chiefest danger will be at the moment when the savages find out that they have been deceived. If you are not then knocked in the head, your being a non-composer will protect you; and you'll then have good reason to expect to die in your bed. If you stay, it must be to sit down here in the shadow, and take the part of Uncas, until such times as the cunning of the Indians discover the cheat, when, as I have already said, your time of trial will come. So choose for yourself—to make a rush or tarry here."

"Even so," said David, firmly; "I will abide in the place of the Delaware. Bravely and generously has he battled in my behalf; and this, and more, will I dare in his service."

"You have spoken as a man, and like one who, under wiser schooling, would have been brought to better things. Hold your head down, and draw in your legs; their formation might tell the truth too early. Keep silent as long as may be; and it would be wise when you do speak, to break out suddenly in one of your shoutings, which will serve to remind the Indians that you are not altogether as responsible as men should be. If, however, they take your scalp, as I trust and believe they will not, depend on it, Uncas and I will not forget the deed, but revenge it as becomes true warriors and trusty friends."

"Hold!" said David, perceiving that with this assurance they were about to leave him; "I am an unworthy and humble follower of one who taught not the damnable principle of revenge. Should I fail, therefore, seek no victims to my manes, but rather forgive my destroyers; and if you remember them at all, let it be in prayers

for the enlightening of their minds and for their eternal welfare."

The scout hesitated, and appeared to muse.

"There is a principle in that," he said, "different from the law of the woods; and yet it is fair and noble to reflect upon." Then, heaving a heavy sigh, probably among the last he ever drew in pining for a condition he had so long abandoned, he added, "it is what I would wish to practice myself, as one without a cross of blood, though it is not always easy to deal with an Indian as you would with a fellow-Christian. God bless you, friend; I do believe your scent is not greatly wrong, when the matter is duly considered, and keeping eternity before the eyes, though much depends on the natural gifts and the force of temptation."

So saying, the scout returned and shook David cordially by the hand, after which act of friendship he immediately left the lodge, attended by the new representative of the beast.

The instant Hawkeye found himself under the observation of the Hurons, he drew up his tall form in the rigid manner of David, threw out his arm in the act of keeping time, and commenced what he intended for an imitation of his psalmody. Happily for the success of this delicate venture, he had to deal with ears but little practiced in the concord of sweet sounds, or the miserable effort would infallibly have been detected. It was necessary to pass within a dangerous proximity of the dark group of the savages, and the voice of the scout grew louder as they drew nigher. When at the nearest point, the Huron who spoke the English thrust out an arm and stopped the supposed singing-master.

"The Delaware dog!" he said, leaning forward and peering through the dim light to catch the expression of the other's features; "is he afraid? Will the Hurons hear his groans?"

A growl so exceedingly fierce and natural proceeded from the beast that the young Indian released his hold and started aside, as if to assure himself that it was not a veritable bear, and no counter-

feit, that was rolling before him. Hawkeye, who feared his voice would betray him to his subtle enemies, gladly profited by the interruption to break out anew in such a burst of musical expression as would probably, in a more refined state of society, have been termed "a grand crash." Among his actual auditors, however, it merely gave him an additional claim to that respect which they never withhold from such as are believed to be the subjects of mental alienation. The little knot of Indians drew back in a body and suffered, as they thought, the conjurer and his inspired assistant to proceed.

It required no common exercise of fortitude in Uncas and the scout to continue the dignified and deliberate pace they had assumed in passing the lodges, especially as they immediately perceived that curiosity had so far mastered fear as to induce the watchers to approach the hut in order to witness the effect of the incantations. The least injudicious or impatient movement on the part of David might betray them, and time was absolutely necessary to insure the safety of the scout. The loud noise the latter conceived it politic to continue drew many curious gazers to the doors of the different huts as they passed; and once or twice a dark-looking warrior stepped across their path, led to the act by superstition or watchfulness. They were not, however, interrupted; the darkness of the hour and the boldness of the attempt proving their principal friends.

The adventurers had got clear of the village, and were now swiftly approaching the shelter of the woods, when a loud and long cry arose from the lodge where Uncas had been confined. The Mohican started on his feet, and shook his shaggy covering, as though the animal he counterfited was about to make some desperate effort.

"Hold!" said the scout, grasping his friend by the shoulder, "let them yell again. 'Twas nothing but wonderment."

He had no occasion to delay, for at the next instant a burst of cries filled the outer air, and rang along the whole extent of the village. Uncas cast his skin, and

stepped forth in his own beautiful proportions. Hawkeye tapped him lightly on the shoulder, and glided ahead.

"Now let the devils strike our scent," said the scout, tearing two rifles, with all their attendant accouterments, from beneath a bush, and flourishing "Kill-deer" as he handed Uncas his weapon; "two at least will find it to their deaths."

Then throwing their pieces to a low trail, like sportsmen in readiness for their game, they dashed forward, and were soon buried in the somber darkness of the forest.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ant. I shall remember:
When Cæsar says, *do this*, it is performed.
—JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE impatience of the savages who lingered about the prison of Uncas, as has been seen, had overcome their dread of the conjurer's breath. They stole cautiously, and with beating hearts, to a crevice, through which the faint light of the fire was glimmering. For several minutes they mistook the form of David for that of their prisoner; but the very accident which Hawkeye had foreseen occurred. Tired of keeping the extremities of his long person so near together, the singer gradually suffered the lower limbs to extend themselves, until one of his misshapen feet actually came in contact with and shoved aside the embers of the fire. At first the Hurons believed the Delaware had been thus deformed by witchcraft. But when David, unconscious of being observed, turned his head, and exposed his simple, mild countenance, in place of the haughty lineaments of their prisoner, it would have exceeded the credulity of even an active to have doubted any longer. They rushed together into the lodge, and laying their hands, with but little ceremony, on their captive, immediately detected the imposition. Then arose the cry first heard by the fugitives. It was succeeded by the most frantic and angry demonstrations of vengeance. David, however, firm in his determina-

tion to cover the retreat of his friends, was compelled to believe that his own final hour had come. Deprived of his book and his pipe, he was fain to trust to a memory that rarely failed him on such subjects; and breaking forth in a loud and impassioned strain, he endeavored to smooth his passage into the other world by singing the opening verse of a funeral anthem. The Indians were seasonably reminded of his infirmity, and rushing into the open air, they aroused the village in the manner described.

A native warrior fights as he sleeps, without the protection of anything defensive. The sounds of the alarm were, therefore, hardly uttered before two hundred men were afoot and ready for the battle or the chase, as either might be required. The escape was soon known; and the whole tribe crowded in a body around the council lodge, impatiently awaiting the instruction of their chiefs. In such a sudden demand on their wisdom the presence of the cunning Magua could scarcely fail of being needed. His name was mentioned, and all looked round in wonder that he did not appear. Messengers were then dispatched to his lodge, requiring his presence.

In the meantime some of the swiftest and most discreet of the young men were ordered to make the circuit of the clearing under cover of the woods, in order to ascertain that their suspected neighbors, the Delawares, designed no mischief. Women and children ran to and fro; and, in short, the whole encampment exhibited another scene of wild and savage confusion. Gradually, however, these symptoms of disorder diminished; and in a few minutes the oldest and most distinguished chiefs were assembled in the lodge in grave consultation.

The clamor of many voices soon announced that a party approached, who might be expected to communicate some intelligence that would explain the mystery of the novel surprise. The crowd without gave way, and several warriors entered the place, bringing with them the hapless conjurer, who had been left so long by the scout in duress.

Notwithstanding this man was held in very unequal estimation among the Hurons, some believing implicitly in his power and others deeming him an impostor, he was now listened to by all with the deepest attention. When his brief story was ended the father of the sick woman stepped forth, and, in a few pithy expressions, related, in his turn, what he knew. These two narratives gave a proper direction to the subsequent inquiries, which were now made with the characteristic cunning of savages.

Instead of rushing in a confused and disorderly throng to the cavern, ten of the wisest and firmest among the chiefs were selected to prosecute the investigation. As no time was to be lost, the instant the choice was made the individuals appointed arose in a body and left the place without speaking. On reaching the entrance the younger men in advance made way for their seniors, and the whole proceeded along the low, dark gallery with the firmness of warriors ready to devote themselves to the public good, though, at the same time, secretly doubting the nature of the power with which they were about to contend.

The outer apartment of the cavern was silent and gloomy. The woman lay in her usual place and posture, though there were those present who affirmed that they had seen her borne to the woods by the supposed "medicine of the white man." Such a direct and palpable contradiction of the tale related by the father caused all eyes to be turned on him. Chafed by the silent imputation, and inwardly troubled by so unaccountable a circumstance, the chief advanced to the side of the bed, and stooping, cast an incredulous look at the features, as if distrusting their reality. His daughter was dead.

The unerring feeling of nature for a moment prevailed, and the old warrior hid his eyes in sorrow. Then recovering his self-possession, he faced his companions, and pointing towards the corpse, he said, in the language of his people—

"The wife of my young man has left us! the Great Spirit is angry with his children."

The mournful intelligence was received in solemn silence. After a short pause, one of the elder Indians was about to speak, when a dark-looking object was seen rolling out of an adjoining apartment into the very center of the room where they stood. Ignorant of the nature of the beings they had to deal with, the whole party drew back a little and gazed in admiration until the object fronted the light, and rising on end, exhibited the distorted, but still fierce and sullen features of Magua. The discovery was succeeded by a general exclamation of amusement.

As soon, however, as the true situation of the chief was understood, several ready knives appeared, and his limbs and tongue were quickly released. The Huron arose and shook himself like a lion quitting his lair. Not a word escaped him, though his hand played convulsively with the handle of his knife, while his lowering eyes scanned the whole party as if they sought an object suited to the first burst of his vengeance.

It was happy for Uncas and the scout, and even David, that they were all beyond the reach of his arm at such a moment; for, assuredly, no refinement in cruelty would then have deferred their death, in opposition to the promptings of the fierce temper that nearly choked him. Meeting everywhere faces that he knew as friends, the savage grated his teeth together like rasps of iron, and swallowed his passion for want of a victim on whom to vent it. This exhibition of anger was noted by all present; and, from an apprehension of exasperating a temper that was already chafed nearly to madness, several minutes were suffered to pass before another word was uttered. When, however, suitable time had elapsed, the oldest of the party spoke.

"My friend has found an enemy," he said. "Is he nigh, that the Hurons may take revenge?"

"Let the Delaware die!" exclaimed Magua in a voice of thunder.

Another long and expressive silence was observed, and was broken, as before, with due precaution by the same individual.

"The Mohican is swift of foot and leaps far," he said; "but my young men are on his trail."

"Is he gone?" demanded Magua in tones so deep and guttural that they seemed to proceed from his inmost chest.

"An evil spirit has been among us, and the Delaware has blinded our eyes."

"An evil spirit!" repeated the other mockingly; "'tis the spirit that has taken the lives of so many Hurons. The spirit that slew my young men at the tumbling river; that took their scalps at the healing spring; and who has now bound the arms of *Le Renard Subtil*!"

"Of whom does my friend speak?"

"Of the dog who carries the heart and cunning of a Huron under a pale skin—*La longue Carabine*."

The pronunciation of so terrible a name produced the usual effect among his auditors. But when time was given for reflection, and the warriors remembered that their formidable and daring enemy had even been in the bosom of their encampment, working injury, fearful rage took the place of wonder, and all those fierce passions with which the bosom of Magua had just been struggling were suddenly transferred to his companions. Some among them gnashed their teeth in anger, others vented their feelings in yells, and some, again, beat the air as frantically as if the object of their resentment were suffering under their blows. But this sudden outburst of temper as quickly subsided in the still and sullen restraint they most affected in their moments of inaction.

Magua, who had, in his turn, found leisure for reflection, now changed his manner, and assumed the air of one who knew how to think and act with a dignity worthy of so grave a subject.

"Let us go to my people," he said; "they wait for us."

His companions consented in silence, and the whole of the savage party left the cavern and returned to the council lodge. When they were seated, all eyes turned on Magua, who understood, from such an indication, that, by common consent, they had devolved the duty of relating what

had passed on him. He arose, and told his tale, without duplicity or reservation. The whole deception practiced by both Duncan and Hawkeye was, of course, laid naked; and no room was found, even for the most superstitious of the tribe, any longer to affix a doubt on the character of the occurrences. It was but too apparent that they had been insultingly, shamefully, disgracefully, deceived. When he had ended, and resumed his seat, the collected tribe—for his auditors, in substance, included all the fighting men of the party—sat regarding each other like men astonished equally at the audacity and the success of their enemies. The next consideration, however, was the means and opportunities for revenge.

Additional pursuers were sent on the trail of the fugitives; and then the chiefs applied themselves, in earnest, to the business of consultation. Many different expedients were proposed by the elder warriors, in succession, to all of which Magua was a silent and respectful listener. That subtle savage had recovered his artifice and self-command, and now proceeded towards his object with his customary caution and skill. It was only when each one disposed to speak had uttered his sentiments that he prepared to advance his own opinions. They were given with additional weight from the circumstance that some of the runners had already returned, and reported that their enemies had been traced so far as to leave no doubt of their having sought safety in the neighboring camp of their suspected allies the Delawares. With the advantage of possessing this important intelligence, the chief warily laid his plans before his fellows, and, as might have been anticipated from his eloquence and cunning, they were adopted without a dissenting voice. They were, briefly, as follows, both in opinions and in motives.

It has already been stated that, in obedience to a policy rarely departed from, the sisters were separated as soon as they reached the Huron village. Magua had early discovered that in retaining the person of Alice he possessed the most effectual check on Cora. When they

parted, therefore, he kept the former within reach of his hand, consigning the one he most valued to the keeping of their allies. The arrangement was understood to be merely temporary, and was made as much with a view to flatter his neighbors as in obedience to the invariable rule of Indian policy.

While goaded incessantly by those revengeful impulses that in a savage seldom slumber, the chief was still attentive to his more permanent personal interests. The follies and disloyalties committed in his youth were to be expiated by a long and painful penance ere he could be restored to the full enjoyment of the confidence of his ancient people, and without confidence there could be no authority in an Indian tribe. In this delicate and arduous situation, the crafty native had neglected no means of increasing his influence; and one of the happiest of his expedients had been the success with which he had cultivated the favor of their powerful and dangerous neighbors. The result of his experiment had answered all the expectations of his policy; for the Hurons were in no degree exempt from that governing principle of nature which induces man to value his gifts precisely in the degree that they are appreciated by others.

But while he was making this ostensible sacrifice to general considerations, Magua never lost sight of his individual motives. The latter had been frustrated by the unlooked-for events which had placed all his prisoners beyond his control; and he now found himself reduced to the necessity of suing for favors to those whom it had so lately been his policy to oblige.

Several of the chiefs had proposed deep and treacherous schemes to surprise the Delawares, and, by gaining possession of their camp, to recover their prisoners by the same blow; for all agreed that their honor, their interest and the peace and happiness of their dead countrymen, imperiously required them speedily to immolate some victims to their revenge. But plans so dangerous to attempt, and of such doubtful issue, Magua found little difficulty in defeating. He exposed their risk and fallacy with his usual skill; and

it was only after he had removed every impediment in the shape of opposing advice that he ventured to propose his own projects.

He commenced by flattering the self-love of his auditors—a never-failing method of commanding attention. When he had enumerated the many different occasions on which the Hurons had exhibited their courage and prowess in the punishment of insults he digressed in a high encomium on the virtue of wisdom. He painted the quality as forming the great point of difference between the beaver and other brutes; between brutes and men; and, finally, between the Hurons in particular and the rest of the human race. After he had sufficiently extolled the property of discretion he undertook to exhibit in what manner its use was applicable to the present situation of their tribe. On the one hand, he said, was their great pale father, the governor of the Canadas, who had looked upon his children with a hard eye, since their tomahawks had been so red; on the other, a people as numerous as themselves, who spoke a different language, possessed different interests, and loved them not, and who would be glad of any pretense to bring them in disgrace with the great white chief.

Then he spoke of their necessities; of the gifts they had a right to expect for their past services; of their distance from their proper hunting-grounds and native villages; and of the necessity of consulting prudence more and inclination less in so critical circumstances. When he perceived that, while the old men applauded his moderation, many of the fiercest and most distinguished of the warriors listened to these politic plans with lowering looks, he cunningly led them back to the subject which they most loved. He spoke openly of the fruits of their wisdom, which he boldly pronounced would be a complete and final triumph over their enemies. He even darkly hinted that their success might be extended, with proper caution, in such a manner as to include the destruction of all whom they had reason to hate. In short, he so blended the warlike with the artful, the obvious with the

obscure, as to flatter the propensities of both parties and to leave to each subject of hope, while neither could say it clearly comprehended his contentions.

The orator, or the politician, who can produce such a state of things, is commonly popular with his contemporaries, however he may be treated by posterity. All perceived that more was meant than was uttered, and each one believed that the hidden meaning was precisely such as his own faculties enabled him to understand or his own wishes led him to anticipate.

In this happy state of things it is not surprising that the management of Magua prevailed. The tribe consented to act with deliberation, and with one voice they committed the direction of the whole affair to the government of the chief who had suggested such wise and intelligible expedients.

Magua had now attained one great object of all his cunning and enterprise. The ground he had lost in the favor of his people was completely regained, and he found himself even placed at the head of affairs. He was in truth their ruler, and so long as he could maintain his popularity, no monarch could be more despotic, especially while the tribe continued in a hostile country. Throwing off, therefore, the appearance of consultation, he assumed the grave air of authority necessary to support the dignity of his office.

Runners were dispatched for intelligence in different directions; spies were ordered to approach and feel the encampment of the Delawares; the warriors were dismissed to their lodges, with an intimation that their services would soon be needed; and the women and children were ordered to retire, with a warning that it was their province to be silent. When these several arrangements were made, Magua passed through the village, stopping here and there to pay a visit where he thought his presence might be flattering to the individual. He confirmed his friends in their confidence, fixed the wavering, and gratified all. Then he sought his own lodge. The wife the Huron chief had abandoned,

when he was chased from among his people, was dead. Children he had none; and he now occupied a hut, without companion of any sort. It was, in fact, the dilapidated and solitary structure in which David had been discovered, and whom he had tolerated in his presence, on those few occasions when they met, with the contemptuous indifference of a haughty superiority.

Hither, then, Magua retired when his labors of policy were ended. While others slept, however, he neither knew nor sought repose. Had there been one sufficiently curious to have watched the movements of the newly-elected chief, he would have seen him seated in a corner of his lodge, musing on the subject of his future plans from the hour of his retirement to the time he had appointed for the warriors to assemble again. Occasionally the air breathed through the crevices of the hut, and the low flames that fluttered about the embers of the fire threw their wavering light on the person of the sullen recluse. At such moments it would not have been difficult to have fancied the dusky savage the Prince of Darkness, brooding on his own fancied wrongs and plotting evil.

Long before the day dawned, however, warrior after warrior entered the solitary hut of Magua, until they had collected to the number of twenty. Each bore his rifle and all the other accouterments of war, though the paint was uniformly peaceful. The entrance of these fierce-looking beings was unnoticed; some seating themselves in the shadows of the place and others standing like motionless statues, until the whole of the designated band was collected.

Then Magua arose and gave the signal to proceed, marching himself in advance. They followed their leader singly, and in that well-known order which has obtained the distinguishing appellation of "Indian file." Unlike other men engaged in the spirit-stirring business of war, they stole from the camp unostentatiously and unobserved, resembling a band of gliding specters more than warriors seeking the bubble reputation by deeds of desperate daring.

Instead of taking the path which led directly towards the camp of the Delawares, Magua led his party for some distance down the windings of the stream, and along the little artificial lake of the beavers. The day began to dawn as they entered the clearing which had been formed by those sagacious and industrious animals. Though Magua, who had resumed his ancient garb, bore the outline of a fox on the dressed skin which formed his robe, there was one chief of his party who carried the beaver as his peculiar symbol, or "totem." There would have been a species of profanity in the omission, had this man passed so powerful a community of his fancied kindred without bestowing some evidence of his regard. Accordingly, he paused, and spoke in words as kind and friendly as if he were addressing more intelligent beings. He called the animals his cousins, and reminded them that his protecting influence was the reason they remained unharmed while so many avaricious traders were prompting the Indians to take their lives. He promised a continuance of his favors, and admonished them to be grateful. After which he spoke of the expedition in which he was himself engaged, and intimated, though with sufficient delicacy and circumlocution, the expediency of bestowing on their relatives a portion of that wisdom for which they were so renowned.*

During the utterance of this extraordinary address the companions of the speaker were as grave and as attentive to his language as though they were all equally impressed with its propriety. Once or twice black objects were seen rising to the surface of the water, and the Huron expressed pleasure, conceiving that his words were not bestowed in vain. Just as he had ended his address the head of a large beaver was thrust from the door of a lodge, whose earthen walls had been much injured, and which the party had believed, from its situation, to be un-

* These harangues to the beasts are frequent among the Indians. They often address their victims in this way, reproaching them for cowardice, or commending their resolution, as they may happen to exhibit fortitude, or the reverse, in suffering.

inhabited. Such an extraordinary sign of confidence was received by the orator as a highly favorable omen; and though the animal retreated a little precipitately, he was lavish of his thanks and commendations.

When Magua thought sufficient time had been lost in gratifying the family affection of the warrior, he again made the signal to proceed. As the Indians moved away in a body, and with a step that would have been inaudible to the ears of any common man, the same venerable-looking beaver once more ventured his head from its cover. Had any of the Hurons turned to look behind them they would have seen the animal watching their movements with an interest and sagacity that might easily have been mistaken for reason. Indeed, so very distinct and intelligible were the devices of the quadruped that even the most experienced observer would have been at a loss to account for its actions, until the moment when the party entered the forest, when the whole would have been explained by seeing the entire animal issue from the lodge, uncasing, by the act, the grave features of Chingachgook from his mask of fur.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Brief, I pray you; for you see, 'tis a busy time with me.

—MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

THE tribe, or rather half tribe, of Delawares, which has been so often mentioned, and whose present place of encampment was so nigh the temporary village of the Hurons, could assemble about an equal number of warriors with the latter people. Like their neighbors, they had followed Montcalm into the territories of the English crown, and were making heavy and serious inroads on the hunting-grounds of the Mohawks; though they had seen fit, with the mysterious reserve so common among the natives, to withhold their assistance at the moment when it was most required. The French had accounted for this unexpected defection on the part of their ally

in various ways. It was the prevalent opinion, however, that they had been influenced by veneration for the ancient treaty, that had once made them dependent on the Six Nations for military protection, and now rendered them reluctant to encounter their former masters. As for the tribe itself, it had been content to announce to Montcalm, through his emissaries, with Indian brevity, that their hatchets were dull, and time was necessary to sharpen them. The politic Captain of the Canadas had deemed it wiser to submit to entertain a passive friend than by any acts of ill-judged severity to convert him into an open enemy.

On that morning when Magua led his silent party from the settlement of the beavers into the forest, in the manner described, the sun rose upon the Delaware encampment as if it had suddenly burst upon a busy people, actively employed in all the customary avocations of high noon. The women ran from lodge to lodge, some engaged in preparing their morning's meal, a few earnestly bent on seeking the comforts necessary to their habits, but more pausing to exchange hasty and whispered sentences with their friends. The warriors were lounging in groups, musing more than they conversed; and when a few words were uttered, speaking like men who deeply weighed their opinions. The instruments of the chase were to be seen in abundance among the lodges; but none departed. Here and there a warrior was examining his arms, with an attention that is rarely bestowed on the implements when no other enemy than the beasts of the forest is expected to be encountered. And, occasionally, the eyes of a whole group were turned simultaneously towards a large and silent lodge in the center of the village, as if it contained the subject of their common thoughts.

During the existence of this scene a man suddenly appeared at the furthest extremity of a platform of rock which formed the level of the village. He was without arms, and his paint tended rather to soften than increase the natural sternness of his austere countenance. When in full view of the Delawares he stopped and

made a gesture of amity, by throwing his arm upward towards heaven, and then letting it fall impressively on his breast. The inhabitants of the village answered his salute by a low murmur of welcome, and encouraged him to advance by similar indications of friendship. Fortified by these assurances the dark figure left the brow of the natural rocky terrace, where it had stood a moment, drawn in a strong outline against the blushing morning sky, and moved with dignity into the very center of the huts. As he approached nothing was audible but the rattling of the light silver ornaments that loaded his arms and neck, and the tinkling of the little bells that fringed his deer skin moc-casins. He made, as he advanced, many courteous signs of greeting to the men he passed, neglecting to notice the women, however, like one who deemed their favor, in the present enterprise, of no importance. When he had reached the group in which it was evident, by the haughtiness of their common mien, that the principal chiefs were collected, the stranger paused, and then the Delawares saw that the active and erect form that stood before them was that of the well-known Huron chief, *Le Renard Subtil*.

His reception was grave, silent and wary. The warriors in front stepped aside, opening the way to their most approved orator by the action; one who spoke all those languages that were cultivated among the northern aborigines.

"The wise Huron is welcome," said the Delaware, in the language of the *Maquas*; "he is come to eat his '*succa tash*'* with his brothers of the lakes."

"He is come," repeated *Magua*, bending his head with the dignity of an eastern prince.

The chief extended his arm, and, taking the other by the wrist, they once more exchanged friendly salutations. Then the Delaware invited his guest to enter his own lodge and share his morning meal. The invitation was accepted; and the two warriors, attended by three or four of the old

men, walked calmly away, leaving the rest of the tribe devoured by a desire to understand the reasons of so unusual a visit, and yet not betraying the least impatience by sign or word.

During the short and frugal repast that followed, the conversation was extremely circumspect and related entirely to the events of the hunt in which *Magua* had so lately been engaged. It would have been impossible for the most finished breeding to wear more of the appearance of considering the visit as a thing of course than did his hosts, notwithstanding every individual present was perfectly aware that it must be connected with some secret object, and that probably of importance to themselves. When the appetites of the whole were appeased the squaws removed the trenchers and gourds, and the two parties began to prepare themselves for a subtle trial of their wits.

"Is the face of my great Canada father turned again towards his Huron children?" demanded the orator of the Delawares.

"When was it ever otherwise?" returned *Magua*. "He calls my people 'most beloved.'"

The Delaware gravely bowed his acquiescence to what he knew to be false and continued—

"The tomahawks of your young men have been very red."

"It is so; but they are now bright and dull; for the *Yengeese* are dead and the Delawares are our neighbors."

The other acknowledged the pacific compliment by a gesture of the hand, and remained silent. Then *Magua*, as if recalled to such a recollection by the allusions to the massacre, demanded—

"Does my prisoner give trouble to my brothers?"

"She is welcome."

"The path between the Hurons and the Delawares is short, and it is open; let her be sent to my squaws if she gives trouble to my brother."

"She is welcome," returned the chief of the latter nation still more emphatically.

The baffled *Magua* continued silent sev-

* A dish composed of cracked corn and beans. It is much used also by the whites. By corn is meant maize.

eral minutes, apparently indifferent, however, to the repulse he had received in this, his opening effort to regain possession of Cora.

"Do my young men leave the Delawares room on the mountains for their hunts?" he at length continued.

"The Lenape are rulers of their own hills," returned the other a little haughtily.

"It is well. Justice is the master of a red-skin! Why should they brighten their tomahawks, and sharpen their knives against each other? Are not the pale-faces thicker than the swallows in the season of flowers?"

"Good!" exclaimed two or three of his auditors at the same time.

Magua waited a little, to permit his words to soften the feelings of the Delawares, before he added—

"Have there not been strange moccasins in the woods? Have not my brothers scented the feet of white men?"

"Let my Canada father come," returned the other, evasively; "his children are ready to see him."

"When the great chief comes, it is to smoke with the Indians in their wigwams. The Hurons say, too, he is welcome. But the Yengeese have long arms, and legs that never tire! My young men dreamed they had seen the trail of the Yengeese nigh the village of the Delawares."

"They will not find the Lenape asleep."

"It is well. The warrior whose eye is open can see his enemy," said Magua, once more shifting his ground, when he found himself unable to penetrate the caution of his companion. "I have brought gifts to my brother. His nation would not go on the war-path, because they did not think it well; but their friends have remembered where they lived."

When he had thus announced his liberal intention the crafty chief arose, and gravely spread his presents before the dazzled eyes of his hosts. They consisted principally of trinkets of little value, plundered from the slaughtered females of William Henry. In the division of the

baubles the cunning Huron discovered no less art than in their selection. While he bestowed those of greater value on the two most distinguished warriors, one of whom was his host, he seasoned his offerings to their inferiors with such well-timed and apposite compliments as left them no grounds for complaint. In short, the whole ceremony contained such a happy blending of the profitable with the flattering that it was not difficult for the donor immediately to read the effect of a generosity so aptly mingled with praise, in the eyes of those he addressed.

This well-judged and politic stroke on the part of Magua was not without instantaneous results. The Delawares lost their gravity in a much more cordial expression; and the host in particular, after contemplating his own liberal share of the spoil for some moments with peculiar gratification, repeated with strong emphasis the words—

"My brother is a wise chief. He is welcome."

"The Hurons love their friends the Delawares," returned Magua. Why should they not? They are colored by the same sun, and their just men will hunt in the same grounds after death. The red-skins should be friends, and look with open eye on the white man. Has not my brother scented spies in the woods?"

The Delaware whose name in English signified "Hard heart"—an appellation that the French had translated into "*Le-cœur-dur*"—forgot that obduracy of purpose which had probably obtained him so significant a title. His countenance grew very sensibly less stern, and he now deigned to answer more directly.

"There have been strange moccasins about my camp. They have been tracked into my lodges."

"Did my brother beat out the dogs?" asked Magua, without adverting in any manner to the former equivocation of the chief.

"It would not do. The stranger is always welcome to the children of the Lenape."

"The stranger, but not the spy."

"Would the Yengeese send their women

as spies? Did not the Huron chief say he took women in the battle?"

"He told no lie. The Yengeese have sent out their scouts. They have been in my wigwams, but they found no one to say welcome. Then they fled to the Delawares—for, say they, the Delawares are our friends; their minds are turned from their Canada father."

This insinuation was a home thrust, and one that in a more advanced state of society would have entitled Magua to the reputation of a skillful diplomatist. The recent defection of the tribe had, as they well knew themselves, subjected the Delawares to much reproach among their French allies; and they were now made to feel that their future actions were to be regarded with jealousy and distrust. There was no deep insight into causes and effects necessary to foresee that such a situation of things was likely to prove highly prejudicial to their future movements. Their distant villages, their hunting grounds, and hundreds of their women and children, together with a material part of their physical force, were actually within the limits of the French territory. Accordingly, this alarming annunciation was received, as Magua intended, with manifest disapprobation, if not with alarm.

"Let my father look in my face," said Le-cœur-dur; "he will see no change. It is true, my young men did not go out on the war-path; they had dreams for not doing so. But they love and venerate the great white chief."

"Will he think so when he hears that his greatest enemy is fed in the camp of his children? When he is told a bloody Yengee smokes at your fire? That the pale-face who has slain so many of his friends goes in and out among the Delawares? Go; my great Canada father is not a fool!"

"Where is the Yengee that the Delawares fear?" returned the other; "who has slain my young men? who is the mortal enemy of my Great Father?"

"La longue Carabine."

The Delaware warriors started at the well-known name, betraying, by their

amazement, that they now learned, for the first time, one so famous among the Indian allies of France was within their power.

"What does my brother mean?" demanded Le-cœur-dur, in a tone that, by its wonder, far exceeded the usual apathy of his race.

"A Huron never lies," returned Magua, coldly, leaning his head against the side of the lodge, and drawing his slight robe across his tawny breast. "Let the Delawares count their prisoners; they will find one whose skin is neither red nor pale."

A long and musing pause succeeded. The chief consulted apart with his companions, and messengers were dispatched to collect certain others of the most distinguished men of the tribe.

As warrior after warrior dropped in, they were each made acquainted, in turn, with the important intelligence that Magua had just communicated. The air of surprise and the usual low, deep, guttural exclamation were common to them all. The news spread from mouth to mouth until the whole encampment became powerfully agitated. The women suspended their labors to catch such syllables as unguardedly fell from the lips of the consulting warriors. The boys deserted their sports, and, walking fearlessly among their fathers, looked up in curious admiration as they heard the brief exclamations of wonder they so freely expressed at the temerity of their hated foe. In short, every occupation was abandoned for the time, and all other pursuits seemed discarded in order that the tribe might freely indulge, after their own peculiar manner, in an open expression of feeling.

When the excitement had a little abated the old men disposed themselves seriously to consider that which it became the honor and safety of their tribe to perform under circumstances of so much delicacy and embarrassment. During all these movements, and in the midst of the general commotion, Magua had not only maintained his seat but the very attitude he had originally taken against the side of the lodge, where he continued as immov-

able and, apparently, as unconcerned as if he had no interest in the result. Not a single indication of the future intentions of his hosts, however, escaped his vigilant eyes. With his consummate knowledge of the nature of the people with whom he had to deal he anticipated every measure on which they decided; and it might also be said that, in many instances, he knew their intentions even before they became known to themselves.

The council of the Delawares was short. When it was ended a general bustle announced that it was to be immediately succeeded by a solemn and formal assemblage of the nation. As such meetings were rare, and only called on occasions of the last importance, the subtle Huron, who still sat apart, a wily and dark observer of the proceedings, now knew that all his projects must be brought to their final issue. He, therefore, left the lodge and walked silently forth to the place in front of the encampment whither the warriors were already beginning to collect.

It might have been half an hour before each individual, including even the women and children, was in his place. The delay had been created by the grave preparations that were deemed necessary to so solemn and unusual a conference. But when the sun was seen climbing above the tops of that mountain against whose bosom the Delawares had constructed their encampment, most were seated; and as his bright rays darted from behind the outline of trees that fringed the eminence they fell upon as grave, as attentive, and as deeply interested a multitude as was probably ever before lighted by his morning beams. Its number somewhat exceeded a thousand souls.

In a collection of so serious savages there is never to be found any impatient aspirant after premature distinction, standing ready to move his auditors to some hasty and perhaps injudicious discussion, in order that his own reputation may be the gainer. An act of so much precipitancy and presumption would seal the downfall of the precocious intellect forever. It rested solely with the oldest and most experienced of the men to lay

the subject of the conference before the people. Until such a one chose to make some movement no deeds in arms, no natural gifts, nor any renown as an orator, would have justified the slightest interruption. On the present occasion the aged warrior whose privilege it was to speak was silent, seemingly oppressed with the magnitude of his subject. The delay had already continued long beyond the usual deliberative pause that always precedes a conference, but no sign of impatience or surprise escaped even the youngest boy. Occasionally an eye was raised from the earth, where the looks of most were riveted, and strayed towards a particular lodge that was, however, in no manner distinguished from those around it except in the peculiar care that had been taken to protect it against the assaults of the weather.

At length, one of those low murmurs that are so apt to disturb a multitude, was heard, and the whole nation arose to their feet by a common impulse. At that instant the door of the lodge in question opened, and three men issuing from it, slowly approached the place of consultation. They were all aged, even beyond that period to which the oldest present had reached; but one in the center, who leaned on his companions for support, had numbered an amount of years to which the human race is seldom permitted to attain. His frame, which had once been tall and erect, like the cedar, was now bending under the pressure of more than a century. The elastic, light step of an Indian was gone, and in its place he was compelled to toil his tardy way over the ground, inch by inch. His dark, wrinkled countenance was in singular and wild contrast with the long white locks which floated on his shoulders, in such thickness as to announce that generations had probably passed away since they had last been shorn.

The dress of this patriarch—for such, considering his vast age, in conjunction with his affinity and influence with his people, he might very properly be termed—was rich and imposing, though strictly after the simple fashions of the tribe. His

robe was of the finest skins, which had been deprived of their fur in order to admit of a hieroglyphical representation of various deeds in arms, done in former ages. His bosom was loaded with medals, some in massive silver, and one or two even in gold, the gifts of various Christian potentates during the long period of his life. He also wore armlets, and cinctures above the ankles, of the latter precious metal. His head, on the whole of which the hair had been permitted to grow, the pursuits of war having so long been abandoned, was encircled by a sort of plated diadem, which in its turn bore lesser and more glittering ornaments, that sparkled amid the glossy hues of three drooping ostrich feathers, dyed a deep black, in touching contrast to the color of his snow-white locks. His tomahawk was nearly hid in silver, and the handle of his knife shone like a horn of solid gold.

So soon as the first hum of emotion and pleasure, which the sudden appearance of this venerated individual created, had a little subsided, the name of "Tamenund" was whispered from mouth to mouth. Magua had often heard the fame of this wise and just Delaware—a reputation that even proceeded so far as to bestow on him the rare gift of holding secret communion with the Great Spirit, and which has since transmitted his name, with some slight alteration, to the white usurpers of his ancient territory, as the imaginary tutelar saint* of a vast empire. The Huron chief, therefore, stepped eagerly out a little from the throng, to a spot whence he might catch a nearer glimpse of the features of the man whose decision was likely to produce so deep an influence on his own fortunes.

The eyes of the old man were closed, as though the organs were wearied by having so long witnessed the selfish workings of the human passions. The color of his skin differed from that of most around him, being richer and darker, the latter

hue having been produced by certain delicate and mazy lines of complicated and yet beautiful figures, which had been traced over most of his person by the operation of tattooing. Notwithstanding the position of the Huron he passed the observant and silent Magua without notice, and, leaning on his two venerable supporters, proceeded to the high place of the multitude, where he seated himself in the center of his nation with the dignity of a monarch and the air of a father.

Nothing could surpass the reverence and affection with which this unexpected visit, from one who belonged rather to another world than to this, was received by his people. After a suitable and decent pause, the principal chiefs arose, and approaching the patriarch, they placed his hands reverently on their heads, seeming to entreat a blessing. The young men were content with touching his robe, or even drawing nigh his person, in order to breathe in the atmosphere of one so aged, so just and so valiant. None but the most distinguished among the youthful warriors even presumed so far as to perform the latter ceremony; the great mass of the multitude deeming it a sufficient happiness to look upon a form so deeply venerated and so well beloved. When these acts of affection and respect were performed, the chiefs drew back again to their several places, and silence reigned in the whole encampment.

After a short delay a few of the young men, to whom instructions had been whispered by one of the aged attendants of Tamenund, arose, left the crowd, and entered the lodge which has already been noted as the object of so much attention throughout that morning. In a few minutes they reappeared, escorting the individual who had caused all these solemn preparations towards the seat of judgment. The crowd opened in a lane; and when the party had re-entered, it closed in again, forming a large and dense belt of human bodies, arranged in an open circle.

* The Americans sometimes call their tutelar saint Tamenay, a corruption of the name of the renowned chief here introduced. There are many traditions which speak of the character and power of Tamenund.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The assembly seated, rising o'er the rest,
Achilles thus the king of men addressed.

—POPE'S HOMER.

CORA stood foremost among the prisoners, entwining her arms in those of Alice, in the tenderness of sisterly love. Notwithstanding the fearful and menacing array of savages on every side of her, no apprehension on her own account could prevent the noble-minded maiden from keeping her eyes fastened on the pale and anxious features of the trembling Alice. Close at their side stood Heyward, with an interest in both that, at such a moment of intense uncertainty, scarcely knew a preponderance in favor of her whom he most loved. Hawkeye had placed himself a little in the rear, with a deference to the superior rank of his companions that no similarity in the state of their present fortunes could induce him to forget. Uncas was not there.

When perfect silence was again restored, and after the usual long, impressive pause, one of the two aged chiefs who sat at the side of the patriarch arose, and demanded aloud, in very intelligible English—

“Which of my prisoners is *La longue Carabine*?”

Neither Duncan nor the scout answered. The former, however, glanced his eyes around the dark and silent assembly, and recoiled a pace, when they fell on the malignant visage of Magua. He saw, at once, that this wily savage had some secret agency in their present arraignment before the nation, and determined to throw every possible impediment in the way of the execution of his sinister plans. He had witnessed one instance of the summary punishments of the Indians, and now dreaded that his companion was to be selected for a second. In this dilemma, with little or no time for reflection, he suddenly determined to cloak his invaluable friend at any or every hazard to himself. Before he had time, however, to speak, the question was repeated in a louder voice and with a clearer utterance.

“Give us arms,” the young man hauti-

ly replied, “and place us in yonder woods. Our deeds shall speak for us!”

“This is the warrior whose name has filled our ears!” returned the chief, regarding Heyward with that sort of curious interest which seems inseparable from man when first beholding one of his fellows to whom merit or accident, virtue or crime, has given notoriety. “What has brought the white man into the camp of the Delawares?”

“My necessities. I come for food, shelter, and friends.”

“It cannot be. The woods are full of game. The head of a warrior needs no other shelter than a sky without clouds; and the Delawares are the enemies, and not the friends, of the Yengeese. Go—the mouth has spoken, while the heart said nothing.”

Duncan, a little at a loss in what manner to proceed, remained silent; but the scout, who had listened attentively to all that passed, now advanced steadily to the front.

“That I did not answer to the call for *La longue Carabine* was not owing either to shame or fear,” he said; “for neither one nor the other is the gift of an honest man. But I do not admit the right of the Mingoes to bestow a name on one whose friends have been mindful of his gifts in this particular; especially as their title is a lie, ‘Kill-deer’ being a grooved barrel and no carabine. I am the man, however, that got the name of Nathaniel from my kin; the compliment of Hawkeye from the Delawares, who live on their own river; and whom the Iroquois have presumed to style the ‘Long Rifle’ without any warranty from him who is most concerned in the matter.”

The eyes of all present, which had hitherto been gravely scanning the person of Duncan, were now turned, on the instant, towards the upright, iron frame of this new pretender to the distinguished appellation. It was in no degree remarkable that there should be found two who were willing to claim so great an honor, for impostors, though rare, were not unknown amongst the natives; but it was altogether material to the just and severe

intentions of the Delawares that there should be no mistake in the matter. Some of their old men consulted together in private, and then, as it would seem, they determined to interrogate their visitor on the subject.

"My brother has said that a snake crept into my camp," said the chief to Magua; "which is he?"

The Huron pointed to the scout.

"Will a wise Delaware believe the barking of a wolf?" exclaimed Duncan, still more confirmed in the evil intentions of his ancient enemy; "a dog never lies, but when was a wolf known to speak the truth?"

The eyes of Magua flashed fire; but suddenly recollecting the necessity of maintaining his presence of mind, he turned away, in silent disdain, well assured that the sagacity of the Indians would not fail to extract the real merits of the point in controversy. He was not deceived; for, after another short consultation, the wary Delaware turned to him again, and expressed the determination of the chiefs, though in the most considerate language.

"My brother has been called a liar," he said, "and his friends are angry. They will show that he has spoken the truth. Give my prisoners guns, and let them prove which is the man."

Magua affected to consider the expedient, which he well knew proceeded from distrust of himself, as a compliment, and made a gesture of acquiescence, well content that his veracity should be supported by so skillful a marksman as the scout. The weapons were instantly placed in the hands of the friendly opponents, and they were bid to fire over the heads of the seated multitude, at an earthen vessel, which lay by accident on a stump, some fifty yards from the place where they stood.

Heyward smiled to himself at the idea of a competition with the scout, though he determined to persevere in the deception, until apprised of the real designs of Magua. Raising his rifle with the utmost care, and renewing his aim three several times, he fired. The bullet cut the wood within a few inches of the vessel; and a general

exclamation of satisfaction announced that the shot was considered a proof of great skill in the use of the weapon. Even Hawkeye nodded his head, as if he would say it was better than he had expected. But, instead of manifesting an intention to contend with the successful marksman, he stood leaning on his rifle for more than a minute, like a man who was completely buried in thought. From this reverie he was, however, awakened by one of the young Indians who had furnished the arms, and who now touched his shoulder, saying in exceedingly broken English—

"Can the pale-face beat it?"

"Yes, Huron!" exclaimed the scout, raising the short rifle in his right hand, and shaking it at Magua with as much apparent ease as if it were a reed; "yes, Huron, I could strike you now, and no power of earth could prevent the deed! The soaring hawk is not more certain of the dove than I am this moment of you, did I choose to send a bullet to your heart! Why should I not? Why—because the gifts of my color forbid it, and I might draw down evil on tender and innocent heads! If you know such a being as God, thank him, therefore, in your inward soul—for you have reason!"

The flushed countenance, angry eye and swelling figure of the scout produced a sensation of secret awe in all that heard him. The Delawares held their breath in expectation; but Magua himself, even while he distrusted the forbearance of his enemy, remained immovable and calm, where he stood wedged in by the crowd, as one who grew to the spot.

"Beat it," repeated the young Delaware at the elbow of the scout.

"Beat what! fool!—what!"—exclaimed Hawkeye, still flourishing the weapon angrily above his head, though his eye no longer sought the person of Magua.

"If the white man is the warrior he pretends," said the aged chief, "let him strike nigher to the mark."

The scout laughed aloud—a noise that produced the startling effect of an unnatural sound on Heyward—then dropping the piece, heavily, into his extended left hand,

it was discharged, apparently by the shock, driving the fragments of the vessel into the air, and scattering them on every side. Almost at the same instant the rattling sound of the rifle was heard, as he suffered it to fall, contemptuously, to the earth.

The first impression of so strange a scene was engrossing admiration. Then a low, but increasing murmur, ran through the multitude, and finally swelled into sounds that denoted a lively opposition in the sentiments of the spectators. While some openly testified their satisfaction at so unexampled dexterity, by far the larger portion of the tribe were inclined to believe the success of the shot was the result of the accident. Heyward was not slow to confirm an opinion that was so favorable to his own pretensions.

"It was chance!" he exclaimed; "none can shoot without an aim!"

"Chance!" echoed the excited woodsman, who was now stubbornly bent on maintaining his identity at every hazard, and on whom the secret hints of Heyward to acquiesce in the deception were entirely lost. "Does yonder lying Huron, too, think it chance? Give him another gun, and place us face to face, without cover or dodge, and let Providence, and our own eyes, decide the matter atween us! I do not make the offer to you, major; for our blood is of a color, and we serve the same master."

"That the Huron is a liar, is very evident," returned Heyward, coolly; "you have yourself heard him assert you to be *La langue Carabine*."

It were impossible to say what violent assertion the stubborn Hawkeye would have next made, in his headlong wish to vindicate his identity, had not the aged Delaware once more interposed.

"The hawk which comes from the clouds can return when he will," he said; "give them the guns."

This time the scout seized the rifle with avidity; nor had Magua, though he watched the movement of the marksman with jealous eyes, any further cause for apprehension.

"Now let it be proved, in the face of

this tribe of Delawares, which is the better man," cried the scout, tapping the butt of his piece with that finger which had pulled so many fatal triggers. "You see the gourd hanging against yonder tree, major; if you are a marksman fit for the borders, let me see you break its shell."

Duncan noted the object and prepared himself to renew the trial. The gourd was one of the usual little vessels used by the Indians, and it was suspended from a dead branch of a small pine by a thong of deer-skin at the full distance of a hundred yards. So strangely compounded is the feeling of self-love, that the young soldier, while he knew the utter worthlessness of the suffrages of his savage umpires, forgot the sudden motives of the contest in a wish to excel. It has been seen, already, that his skill was far from being contemptible, and he now resolved to put forth its nicest qualities. Had his life depended on the issue, the aim of Duncan could not have been more deliberate or guarded. He fired; and three or four young Indians, who sprang forward at the report, announced with a shout that the ball was in the tree, a very little on one side of the proper object. The warriors uttered a common ejaculation of pleasure, and then turned their eyes inquiringly on the movements of his rival.

"It may do for the Royal Americans!" said Hawkeye, laughing once more in his own silent, heartfelt manner; "but had my gun often turned so much from the true line, many a marten whose skin is now in a lady's muff would still be in the woods; ay, and many a bloody Mingo who has departed to his final account would be acting his deviltries at this very day atween the provinces. I hope the squaw who owns the gourd has more of them in her wigwam, for this will never hold water again!"

The scout had shook his priming and cocked his piece while speaking; and, as he ended, he threw back a foot and slowly raised the muzzle from the earth; the motion was steady, uniform and in one direction. When on a perfect level, it remained

for a single moment without tremor or variation, as though both man and rifle were carved in stone. During that stationary instant it poured forth its contents in a bright, glancing sheet of flame. Again the young Indians bounded forward; but their hurried search and disappointed looks announced that no traces of the bullet were to be seen.

"Go," said the old chief to the scout, in a tone of strong disgust; "thou art a wolf in the skin of a dog. I will talk to the 'Long Rifle' of the Yengeese."

"Ah! had I that piece which furnished the name you use I would obligate myself to cut the thong and drop the gourd without breaking it!" returned Hawkeye, perfectly undisturbed by the other's manner. "Fools, if you would find the bullet of a sharpshooter of these woods you must look *in* the object and not around it!"

The Indian youths instantly comprehended his meaning—for this time he spoke in the Delaware tongue—and tearing the gourd from the tree, they held it on high with an exulting shout, displaying a hole in its bottom which had been cut by the bullet after passing through the usual orifice in the center of its upper side. At this unexpected exhibition a loud and vehement expression of pleasure burst from the mouth of every warrior present. It decided the question, and effectually established Hawkeye in the possession of his dangerous reputation. Those curious and admiring eyes, which had been turned again on Heyward, were finally directed to the weather-beaten form of the scout, who immediately became the principal object of attention to the simple and unsophisticated beings by whom he was surrounded. When the sudden and noisy commotion had a little subsided the aged chief resumed his examination.

"Why did you wish to stop my ears?" he said, addressing Duncan; "are the Delawares fools that they could not know the young panther from the cat?"

"They will yet find the Huron a singing bird," said Duncan, endeavoring to adopt the figurative language of the natives.

"It is good. We will know who can shut the ears of men. Brother," added

the chief, turning his eyes on Magua, "the Delawares listen."

Thus singled, and directly called on to declare his object, the Huron arose; and advancing with great deliberation and dignity, into the very center of the circle, where he stood confronted to the prisoners, he placed himself in an attitude to speak. Before opening his mouth, however, he bent his eyes slowly along the whole living boundary of earnest faces, as if to temper his expression to the capacities of his audience. On Hawkeye he cast a glance of respectful enmity; on Duncan, a look of inextinguishable hatred; the shrinking figure of Alice he scarcely deigned to notice; but when his glance met the firm, commanding and yet lovely form of Cora, his eyes lingered a moment, with an expression that it might have been difficult to define. Then, filled with his own dark intentions, he spoke in the language of the Canadas, a tongue that he well knew was comprehended by most of his auditors.

"The Spirit that made men colored them differently," commenced the subtle Huron. "Some are blacker than the sluggish bear. These he said should be slaves; and he ordered them to work forever like the beaver. You may hear them groan, when the south wind blows, louder than the lowing buffaloes along the shores of the great salt lake, where the big canoes come and go with them in droves. Some he made with faces paler than the ermine of the forests; and these he ordered to be traders; dogs to their women and wolves to their slaves. He gave this people the nature of the pigeon; wings that never tire; young more plentiful than the leaves on the trees, and appetites to devour the earth. He gave them tongues like the false call of the wildcat; hearts like rabbits; the cunning of the hog (but none of the fox), and arms longer than the legs of the moose. With his tongue he stops the ears of the Indians; his heart teaches him to pay warriors to fight his battles; his cunning tells him how to get together the goods of the earth; and his arms inclose the land from the shores of the salt water to the

islands of the great lake. His gluttony makes him sick; God gave him enough, and yet he wants all. Such are the pale-faces.

"Some the Great Spirit made with skins brighter and redder than yonder sun," continued Magua, pointing impressively upwards to the lurid luminary, which was struggling through the misty atmosphere of the horizon; "and these did he fashion to his own mind. He gave them this island as he had made it, covered with trees and filled with game. The wind made their clearings; the sun and rains ripened their fruits; and the snows came to tell them to be thankful. What need had they of roads to journey by! They saw through the hills! When the beavers worked, they lay in the shade and looked on. The winds cooled them in summer; in winter skins kept them warm. If they fought among themselves, it was to prove that they were men. They were brave; they were just; they were happy."

Here the speaker paused, and again looked around him to discover if his legend had touched the sympathies of his listeners. He met everywhere with eyes riveted on his own, heads erect and nostrils expanded, as if each individual present felt himself able and willing, singly, to redress the wrongs of his race.

"If the Great Spirit gave different tongues to his red children," he continued in a low, still melancholy voice, "it was that all animals might understand them. Some he placed among the snows, with their cousin the bear. Some he placed near the setting sun on the road to the happy hunting-grounds. Some on the lands around the great fresh waters; but to his greatest and most beloved he gave the sands of the salt lake. Do my brothers know the name of this favored people?"

"It was the Lenape!" exclaimed twenty eager voices in a breath.

"It was the Lenni Lenape!" returned Magua, affecting to bend his head in reverence to their former greatness. "It was the tribe of the Lenape! The sun rose from water that was salt, and set in water that was sweet, and never hid himself from their eyes. But why should I, a

Huron of the woods, tell a wise people their own traditions? Why remind them of their injuries; their ancient greatness; their deeds; their glory; their happiness; their losses; their defeats; their misery? Is there not one among them who has seen it all and who knows it to be true? I have done. My tongue is still, for my heart is of lead. I listen."

As the voice of the speaker suddenly ceased, every face and all eyes turned, by a common movement, towards the venerable Tamenund. From the moment that he took his seat until the present instant, the lips of the patriarch had not severed, and scarcely a sign of life had escaped him. He sat bent in feebleness, and apparently unconscious of the presence he was in during the whole of that opening scene, in which the skill of the scout had been so clearly established. At the nicely graduated sounds of Magua's voice, however, he betrayed some evidence of consciousness, and once or twice he even raised his head as if to listen. But when the crafty Huron spoke of his nation by name the eyelids of the old man raised themselves, and he looked out upon the multitude with that sort of dull unmeaning expression which might be supposed to belong to the countenance of a specter. Then he made an effort to rise, and being upheld by his supporters, he gained his feet, in a posture commanding by its dignity, while he tottered with weakness.

"Who calls upon the children of the Lenape?" he said, in a deep, guttural voice, that was rendered awfully audible by the breathless silence of the multitude; "who speaks of things gone? Does not the egg become a worm—the worm a fly, and perish? Why tell the Delawares, of good that is past? Better thank the Manitto for that which remains."

"It is a Wyandot," said Magua, stepping nigher to the rude platform on which the other stood; "a friend of Tamenund."

"A friend!" repeated the sage, on whose brow a dark frown settled, imparting a portion of that severity which had rendered his eye so terrible in middle age—"Are the Mingoes rulers of the earth? What brings a Huron here?"

"Justice. His prisoners are with his brothers and he comes for his own."

Tamenund turned his head towards one of his supporters and listened to the short explanation the man gave. Then facing the applicant, he regarded him a moment with deep attention; after which he said in a low and reluctant voice—

"Justice is the law of the great Manitto. My children, give the stranger food. Then, Huron, take thine own and depart."

On the delivery of this solemn judgment the patriarch seated himself, and closed his eyes again, as if better pleased with the images of his own ripened experience than with the visible objects of the world. Against such a decree there was no Delaware sufficiently hardy to murmur, much less oppose himself. The words were barely uttered when four or five of the younger warriors, stepping behind Heyward and the scout, passed things so dexterously and rapidly around their arms as to hold them both in instant bondage. The former was too much engrossed with his precious and nearly insensible burden to be aware of their intentions before they were executed; and the latter, who considered even the hostile tribes of the Delawares a superior race of beings, submitted without resistance. Perhaps, however, the manner of the scout would not have been so passive had he fully comprehended the language in which the preceding dialogue had been conducted.

Magua cast a look of triumph around the whole assembly before he proceeded to the execution of his purpose. Perceiving that the men were unable to offer any resistance he turned his looks on her he valued most. Cora met his gaze with an eye so calm and firm that his resolution wavered. Then recollecting his former artifice, he raised Alice from the arms of the warrior against whom she leaned, and beckoning Heyward to follow, he motioned for the encircling crowd to open. But Cora, instead of obeying the impulse he had expected, rushed to the feet of the patriarch, and raising her voice, exclaimed aloud—

"Just and venerable Delaware, on thy wisdom and power we lean for mercy! Be deaf to yonder artful and remorseless

monster, who poisons thy ears with falsehoods to feed his thirst for blood. Thou that hast lived long, and that hast seen the evil of the world, should know how to temper its calamities to the miserable."

The eyes of the old man opened heavily, and he once more looked upwards at the multitude. As the piercing tones of the supplicant swelled on his ears, they moved slowly in the direction of her person, and finally settled there in a steady gaze. Cora had cast herself to her knees; and, with hands clenched in each other and pressed upon her bosom, she remained like a beauteous and breathing model of her sex, looking up in his faded but majestic countenance with a species of holy reverence. Gradually the expression of Tamenund's features changed, and losing their vacancy in admiration, they lighted with a portion of that intelligence which, a century before, had been wont to communicate his youthful fire to the extensive bands of the Delawares. Rising without assistance, and seemingly without an effort, he demanded, in a voice that startled its auditors by its firmness—

"What art thou?"

"A woman. One of a hated race, if thou wilt—a Yengee. But one who has never harmed thee, and who cannot harm thy people if she would; who asks for succor."

"Tell me, my children," continued the patriarch, hoarsely, motioning to those around him, though his eyes still dwelt upon the kneeling form of Cora, "where have the Delawares camped?"

"In the mountains of the Iroquois, beyond the clear springs of the Horican."

"Many parching summers are come and gone," continued the sage, "since I drank of the waters of my own river. The children of Minquon* are the justest white men; but they were thirsty, and they

* William Penn was termed Minquon by the Delawares, and as he never used violence or injustice in his dealings with them, his reputation for probity passed into a proverb. The American is justly proud of the origin of his nation, which is, perhaps, unequaled in the history of the world; but the Pennsylvanian and Jerseyman have more reason to value themselves in their ancestors than the natives of any other States, since no wrong was done the original owners of the soil.

took it to themselves. Do they follow us so far?"

"We follow none; we covet nothing," answered Cora. "Captives against our wills, have we been brought amongst you; and we ask but permission to depart to our own in peace. Art thou not Tamenund—the father—the judge—I had almost said, the prophet—of this people?"

"I am Tamenund of many days."

"'Tis now some seven years that one of thy people was at the mercy of a white chief on the borders of this province. He claimed to be of the blood of the good and just Tamenund. 'Go,' said the white man, 'for thy parent's sake thou art free.' Dost thou remember the name of that English warrior?"

"I remember, that when a laughing boy," returned the patriarch, with the peculiar recollection of vast age, "I stood upon the sands of the sea-shore, and saw a big canoe with wings whiter than the swan's, and wider than any eagle's, come from the rising sun."

"Nay, nay; I speak not of a time so very distant, but of favor shown to thy kindred by one of mine within the memory of thy youngest warrior."

"Was it when the Yengeese and Dutchmanne fought for the hunting-grounds of the Delawares? Then Tamenund was a chief, and first laid aside the bow for the lightning of the pale-faces——"

"Nor yet then," interrupted Cora, "by many ages; I speak of a thing of yesterday. Surely, surely, you forget it not."

"It was but yesterday," rejoined the aged man with touching pathos, "that the children of the Leuape were masters of the world. The fishes of the salt lake, the birds, the beasts, and the Mengwee of the woods, owned them for Sagamores."

Cora bowed her head in disappointment, and for a bitter moment struggled with her chagrin. Then elevating her rich features and beaming eyes, she continued, in tones scarcely less penetrating than the unearthly voice of the patriarch himself—

"Tell me, is Tamenund a father?"

The old man looked down upon her from his elevated stand, with a benignant smile on his wasted countenance, and then casting his eye slowly over the whole assemblage, he answered—

"Of a nation."

"For myself I ask nothing. Like thee and thine, venerable chief," she continued, pressing her hands convulsively on her heart, and suffering her head to droop until her burning cheeks were nearly concealed in the maze of dark glossy tresses that fell in disorder upon her shoulders, "the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child. But yonder is one who has never known the weight of Heaven's displeasure until now. She is the daughter of an old and failing man, whose days are near their close. She has many, very many, to love her, and delight in her; and she is too good, much too precious to become the victim of that villain."

"I know that the pale-faces are a proud and hungry race. I know that they claim not only to have the earth, but that the meanness of their color is better than the Sachems of the red man. The dogs and crows of their tribes," continued the earnest old chieftain, without heeding the wounded spirit of his listener, whose head was nearly crushed to the earth in shame, as he proceeded, "would bark and caw before they would take a woman to their wigwams whose blood was not of the color of snow. But let them not boast before the face of the Manitto too loud. They entered the land at the rising, and may yet go off at the setting sun. I have often seen the locusts strip the leaves from the trees, but the season of blossoms has always come again."

"It is so," said Cora, drawing a long breath, as if reviving from a trance, raising her face, and shaking back her shining veil, with a kindling eye, that contradicted the death-like paleness of her countenance; "but why—it is not permitted us to inquire. There is yet one of thine own people who has not been brought before thee; before thou lettest the Huron depart in triumph, hear him speak."

Observing Tamenund to look about him doubtfully, one of his companions said—

"It is a snake—a red-skin in the pay of the Yengeese. We keep him for the torture."

"Let him come," returned the sage.

Then Tamenund once more sank into his seat, and a silence so deep prevailed while the young men prepared to obey his simple mandate, that the leaves which fluttered in the draught of the light morning air were distinctly heard rustling in the surrounding forest.

CHAPTER XXX.

If you deny me, lie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice:
I stand for judgment; answer, shall I have it?
—SHAKESPEARE.

THE silence continued unbroken by human sounds for many anxious minutes. Then the waving multitude opened and shut again, and Uncas stood in the living circle. All those eyes, which had been curiously studying the lineaments of the sage as the source of their own intelligence, turned on the instant, and were now bent in secret admiration on the erect, agile and faultless person of the captive. But neither the presence in which he found himself nor the exclusive attention that he attracted in any manner disturbed the self-possession of the young Mohican. He cast a deliberate and observing look on every side of him, meeting the settled expression of hostility that lowered in the visages of the chiefs with the same calmness as the curious gaze of the attentive children. But when, last in his haughty scrutiny, the person of Tamenund came under his glance, his eye became fixed, as though all other objects were already forgotten. Then advancing with a slow and noiseless step up the area, he placed himself immediately before the footstool of the sage. Here he stood unnoted, though keenly observant himself, until one of the chiefs apprised the latter of his presence.

"With what tongue does the prisoner speak to the Manitto?" demanded the patriarch, without unclosing his eyes.

"Like his fathers," Uncas replied; "with the tongue of a Delaware."

At this sudden and unexpected annunciation a low, fierce yell ran through the multitude, that might not inaptly be compared to the growl of the lion, as his choler is first awakened—a fearful omen of the weight of his future anger. The effect was equally strong on the sage, though differently exhibited. He passed a hand before his eyes, as if to exclude the least evidence of so shameful a spectacle, while he repeated, in his low, guttural tones, the words he had just heard.

"A Delaware! I have lived to see the tribes of the Lenape driven from their council fires, and scattered, like broken herds of deer, among the hills of the Iroquois! I have seen the hatchets of a strange people sweep woods from the valleys that the winds of Heaven had spared! The beasts that run on the mountains, and the birds that fly above the trees, have I seen living in the wigwams of men; but never before have I found a Delaware so base as to creep, like a poisonous serpent, into the camps of his nation."

"The singing-birds have opened their bills," returned Uncas, in the softest notes of his own musical voice; "and Tamenund has heard their song."

The sage started and bent his head aside as if to catch the fleeting sounds of some passing melody.

"Does Tamenund dream!" he exclaimed. "What voice is at his ear! Have the winters gone backward! Will summer come again to the children of the Lenape!"

A solemn and respectful silence succeeded this incoherent burst from the lips of the Delaware prophet. His people readily construed his unintelligible language into one of those mysterious conferences he was believed to hold so frequently with a superior intelligence, and they awaited the issue of the revelation in awe. After a patient pause, however, one of the aged men, perceiving that the sage had lost the recollection of the subject before them, ventured to remind him again of the presence of the prisoner.

"The false Delaware trembles lest he should hear the words of Tamenund," he said. "'Tis a hound that howls when the Yengeese show him a trail."

"And ye," returned Uncas, looking sternly around him, "are dogs that whine when the Frenchman casts ye the offals of his deer!"

Twenty knives gleamed in the air, and as many warriors sprang to their feet at this biting, and perhaps merited, retort; but a motion from one of the chiefs suppressed the outbreking of their tempers, and restored the appearance of quiet. The task might probably have been more difficult had not a movement made by Tamenund indicated that he was again about to speak.

"Delaware!" resumed the sage, "little art thou worthy of thy name. My people have not seen a bright sun in many winters; and the warrior who deserts his tribe when hid in clouds is doubly a traitor. The law of the Manitto is just. It is so; while the rivers run and the mountains stand, while the blossoms come and go on the trees, it must be so. He is thine, my children; deal justly by him."

Not a limb was moved, nor was a breath drawn louder and longer than common, until the closing syllable of this final decree had passed the lips of Tamenund. Then a cry of vengeance burst at once, as it might be, from the united lips of the nation—a frightful augury of their ruthless intensions. In the midst of these prolonged and savage yells a chief proclaimed, in a high voice, that the captive was condemned to endure the dreadful trial of torture by fire. The circle broke its order, and screams of delight mingled with the bustle and tumult of preparation. Heyward struggled madly with his captors; the anxious eyes of Hawkeye began to look around him with an expression of peculiar earnestness; and Cora again threw herself at the feet of the patriarch, once more a suppliant for mercy.

Throughout the whole of these trying moments Uncas had alone preserved his serenity. He looked on the preparations with a steady eye, and when the tormentors came to seize him he met them with a

firm and upright attitude. One among them, if possible more fierce and savage than his fellows, seized the hunting shirt of the young warrior and at a single effort tore it from his body. Then, with a yell of frantic pleasure he leaped towards his unresisting victim, and prepared to lead him to the stake. But at that moment, when he appeared most a stranger to the feelings of humanity, the purpose of the savage was arrested as suddenly as if a supernatural agency had interposed in the behalf of Uncas. The eye-balls of the Delaware seemed to start from their sockets; his mouth opened, and his whole form became frozen in an attitude of amazement. Raising his hand with a slow and regulated motion he pointed with a finger to the bosom of the captive. His companions crowded about him in wonder, and every eye was, like his own, fastened intently on the figure of a small tortoise, beautifully tattooed on the breast of the prisoner, in a bright blue tint.

For a single instant Uncas enjoyed his triumph, smiling calmly on the scene. Then motioning the crowd away with a high and haughty sweep of his arm, he advanced in front of the nation with the air of a king, and spoke in a voice louder than the murmur of admiration that ran through the multitude.

"Men of the Lenni Lenape!" he said, "my race upholds the earth! Your feeble tribe stands on my shell! What fire that a Delaware can light would burn the child of my fathers," he added, pointing proudly to the simple blazonry on his skin; "the blood that came from such a stock would smother your flames! My race is the grandfather of nations!"

"Who art thou?" demanded Tamenund, rising at the startling tones he heard, more than at any meaning conveyed by the language of the prisoner.

"Uncas, the son of Chingachgook," answered the captive modestly, turning from the nation, and bending his head in reverence to the other's character and years; "a son of the great Unamis."*

"The hour of Tamenund is nigh!" ex-

* Turtle.

claimed the sage; "the day is come, at last, to the night! I thank the Manitto, that one is here to fill my place at the council-fire. Uncas, the child of Uncas, is found! Let the eyes of a dying eagle gaze on the rising sun."

The youth stepped lightly, but proudly, on the platform, where he became visible to the whole agitated and wondering multitude. Tamenund held him long at the length of his arm, and read every turn in the fine lineaments of his countenance, with the untiring gaze of one who recalled days of happiness.

"Is Tamenund a boy?" at length the bewildered prophet exclaimed. "Have I dreamt of so many snows—that my people were scattered like floating sands—of Yengeese, more plenty than the leaves on the trees! The arrow of Tamenund would not frighten the fawn; his arm is withered like the branch of a dead oak; the snail would be swifter in the race; yet is Uncas before him as they went to battle against the pale-faces! Uncas, the panther of his tribe, the eldest son of the Lenape, the wisest Sagamore of the Mohicans! Tell me, ye Delawares, has Tamenund been a sleeper for a hundred winters?"

The calm and deep silence which succeeded these words sufficiently announced the awful reverence with which his people received the communication of the patriarch. None dared to answer, though all listened in breathless expectation of what might follow. Uncas, however, looking in his face with the fondness and veneration of a favored child, presumed on his own high and acknowledged rank to reply.

"Four warriors of his race have lived and died," he said, "since the friend of Tamenund led his people in battle. The blood of the turtle has been in many chiefs, but all have gone back into the earth from whence they came except Chingachgook and his son."

"It is true—it is true," returned the sage, a flash of recollection destroying all his pleasing fancies, and restoring him at once to a consciousness of the true history of his nation. Our wise men have often

said that two warriors of the unchanged race were in the hills of the Yengeese; why have their seats at the council-fires of the Delawares been so long empty?"

At these words the young man raised his head, which he had still kept bowed a little in reverence; and lifting his voice so as to be heard by the multitude, as if to explain at once and forever the policy of his family, he said aloud—

"Once we slept where we could hear the salt lake speak in its anger. Then we were rulers and Sagamores over the land. But when a pale-face was seen on every brook we followed the deer back to the river of our nation. The Delawares were gone. Few warriors of them all stayed to drink of the stream they loved. Then said my fathers, 'Here will we hunt. The waters of the rivers go into the salt lake. If we go towards the setting sun we shall find streams that run into the great lakes of sweet water; there would a Mohican die, like fishes of the sea, in the clear springs. When the Manitto is ready and shall say, "Come," we will follow the river to the sea and take our own again.' Such, Delawares, is the belief of the children of the Turtle. Our eyes are on the rising, and not towards the setting sun. We know whence he comes, but we know not whither he goes. It is enough."

The men of the Lenape listened to his words with all the respect that superstition could lend, finding a secret charm even in the figurative language with which the young Sagamore imparted his ideas. Uncas himself watched the effect of his brief explanation with intelligent eyes, and gradually dropped the air of authority he had assumed as he perceived that his auditors were content. Then permitting his looks to wander over the silent throng that crowded around the elevated seat of Tamenund, he first perceived Hawkeye in his bonds. Stepping eagerly from his stand, he made way for himself to the side of his friend, and cutting his thongs with a quick and angry stroke of his own knife, he motioned to the crowd to divide. The Indians silently obeyed, and once more they stood ranged in their circle, as before his appearance among them. Un-

cas took the scout by the hand, and led him to the feet of the patriarch.

"Father," he said, "look at this pale-face; a just man and the friend of the Delawares."

"Is he a son of Miquon?"

"Not so; a warrior known to the Yengeese, and feared by the Maquas."

"What name has he gained by his deeds?"

"We call him Hawkeye," Uncas replied, using the Delaware phrase; "for his sight never fails. The Mingoës know him better by the death he gives their warriors; with them he is 'The long Rifle.'"

"La longue Carabine!" exclaimed Tamenund, opening his eyes, and regarding the scout sternly. "My son has not done well to call him friend."

"I call him so who proves himself such," returned the young chief, with great calmness, but with a steady mien.

"If Uncas is welcome among the Delawares, then is Hawkeye with his friends."

"The pale-face has slain my young men; his name is great for the blows he has struck the Lenape."

"If a Mingo has whispered that much in the ear of the Delaware, he has only shown that he is a singing-bird," said the scout, who now believed that it was time to vindicate himself from such offensive charges, and who spoke in the tongue of the man he addressed, modifying his Indian figures, however, with his own peculiar notions. "That I have slain the Maquas I am not the man to deny, even at their own council-fires; but that, knowingly, my hand has ever harmed a Delaware, is opposed to the reason of my gifts, which is friendly to them, and all that belongs to their nation."

A low exclamation of applause passed among the warriors, who exchanged looks with each other like men that first began to perceive their error.

"Where is the Huron?" demanded Tamenund. "Has he stopped my ears?"

Magua, whose feelings during that scene in which Uncas had triumphed may be much better imagined than described, answered to the call by stepping boldly in front of the patriarch.

"The just Tamenund," he said, "will not keep what a Huron has lent."

"Tell me, son of my brother," returned the sage, avoiding the dark countenance of Le Subtil, and turning gladly to the more ingenuous features of Uncas, "has the stranger a conqueror's right over you?"

"He has none. The panther may get into snares set by the women; but he is strong and knows how to leap through them."

"La longue Carabine?"

"Laughs at the Mingoës. Go, Huron, ask your squaws the color of a bear."

"The stranger and the white maiden that came into my camp together?"

"Should journey on an open path."

"And the woman that the Huron left with my warriors?"

Uncas made no reply.

"And the woman that the Mingo has brought into my camp," repeated Tamenund gravely.

"She is mine," cried Magua, shaking his hand in triumph at Uncas. "Mohican, you know that she is mine."

"My son is silent," said Tamenund, endeavoring to read the expression of the face that the youth turned from him in sorrow.

"It is so," was the low answer.

A short and impressive pause succeeded, during which it was very apparent with what reluctance the multitude admitted the justice of the Mingo's claim. At length the sage, on whom alone the decision depended, said in a firm voice—

"Huron, depart."

"As he came, just Tamenund," demanded the wily Magua, "or with hands filled with the faith of the Delawares? The wigwam of Le Renard Subtil is empty. Make him strong with his own."

The aged man mused with himself for a time, and then bending his head towards one of his venerable companions, he asked—

"Are my ears open?"

"It is true."

"Is this Mingo a chief?"

"The first in his nation."

"Girl, what wouldst thou? A great

warrior takes thee to wife. Go; thy race will not end."

"Better, a thousand times, it should," exclaimed the horror-struck Cora, "than meet with such a degradation!"

"Huron, her mind is in the tents of her fathers. An unwilling maiden makes an unhappy wigwam."

"She speaks with the tongue of her people," returned Magua, regarding his victim with a look of bitter irony. "She is of a race of traders, and will bargain for a bright look. Let Tamenund speak the words."

"Take you the wampum, and our love."

"Nothing hence but what Magua brought hither."

"Then depart with thine own. The great Manitto forbids that a Delaware should be unjust."

Magua advanced, and seized his captive strongly by the arm; the Delawares fell back in silence; and Cora, as if conscious that remonstrance would be useless, prepared to submit to her fate without resistance.

"Hold, hold!" cried Duncan springing forward; "Huron, have mercy! her ransom shall make thee richer than any of thy people were ever yet known to be."

"Magua is a red-skin; he wants not the beads of the pale-faces."

"Gold, silver, powder, lead—all that a warrior needs shall be in thy wigwam; all that becomes the greatest chief."

"Le Subtil is very strong," cried Magua, violently shaking the hand which grasped the unresisting arm of Cora; "he has his revenge!"

"Mighty ruler of providence!" exclaimed Heyward, clasping his hands together in agony, "can this be suffered! To you, just Tamenund, I appeal for mercy."

"The words of the Delaware are said," returned the sage, closing his eyes and dropping back into his seat, alike wearied with his mental and his bodily exertion. "Men speak not twice."

"That a chief should not misspend his time in unsaying what has once been spoken, is wise and reasonable," said

Hawkeye, motioning to Duncan to be silent; "but it is also prudent in every warrior to consider well before he strikes his tomahawk into the head of his prisoner. Huron, I love you not; nor can I say that any Mingo has ever received much favor at my hands. It is fair to conclude that, if this war does not soon end, many more of your warriors will meet me in the woods. Put it to your judgment, then, whether you would prefer taking such a prisoner as that into your encampment, or one like myself, who am a man that it would greatly rejoice your nation to see with naked hands."

"Will 'The long Rifle' give his life for the woman?" demanded Magua, hesitatingly; for he had already made a motion towards quitting the place with his victim.

"No, no; I have not said so much as that," returned Hawkeye, drawing back with suitable discretion, when he noted the eagerness with which Magua listened to his proposal. "It would be an unequal exchange, to give a warrior, in the prime of his age and usefulness, for the best woman on the frontiers. I might consent to go into winter quarters, now—at least six weeks afore the leaves will turn—on condition you will release the maiden."

Magua shook his head, and made an impatient sign for the crowd to open.

"Well, then," added the scout, with the musing air of a man who had not half made up his mind, "I will throw 'Kill-deer' into the bargain. Take the word of an experienced hunter, the piece has not its equal atween the provinces."

Magua still disdained to reply, continuing his efforts to disperse the crowd.

"Perhaps," added the scout, losing his dissembled coolness exactly in proportion as the other manifested an indifference to the exchange, "if I should condition to teach your young men the real virtue of the we'pon, it would smoothe the little differences in our judgments."

Le Renard fiercely ordered the Delawares, who still lingered in an impenetrable belt around him, in hopes he would listen to the amicable proposal, to open his path, threatening, by the glance of

his eye, another appeal to the infallible justice of their "prophet."

"What is ordered must sooner or later arrive," continued Hawkeye, turning with a sad and humbled look to Uncas. "The varlet knows his advantage, and will keep it! God bless you, boy; you have found friends among your natural kin, and I hope they will prove as true as some you have met who had no Indian cross. As for me, sooner or later, I must die; it is therefore fortunate there are but few to make my death-howl. After all, it is likely the imps would have managed to master my scalp, so a day or two will make no great difference in the everlasting reckoning of time. God bless you," added the rugged woodsman, bending his head aside, and then instantly changing its direction again, with a wistful look towards the youth; "I loved both you and your father, Uncas, though our skins are not altogether of a color, and our gifts are somewhat different. Tell the Sagamore I never lost sight of him in my greatest trouble; and, as for you, think of me sometimes when on a lucky trail; and depend on it, boy, whether there be one heaven or two, there is a path in the other world by which honest men may come together again. You'll find the rifle in the place where we hid it; take it, and keep it for my sake; and harkee, lad, as your natural gifts don't deny you the use of vengeance, use it a little freely on the Mingoes; it may unburden grief at my loss, and ease your mind. Huron, I accept your offer; release the woman. I am your prisoner."

A suppressed but still distinct murmur of approbation ran through the crowd at this generous proposition; even the fiercest among the Delaware warriors manifesting pleasure at the manliness of the intended sacrifice. Magua paused, and for an anxious moment, it might be said, he doubted; then casting his eyes on Cora with an expression in which ferocity and admiration were strangely mingled, his purpose became fixed forever.

He intimated his contempt of the offer with a backward motion of his head, and said, in a steady and settled voice—

"Le Renard Subtil is a great chief; he

has but one mind. Come," he added, laying his hand too familiarly on the shoulder of his captive to urge her onward; "a Huron is no tattler; we will go."

The maiden drew back in lofty womanly reserve and her dark eye kindled, while the rich blood shot, like the passing brightness of the sun, into her very temples at the indignity.

"I am your prisoner, and at a fitting time shall be ready to follow, even to my death. But violence is unnecessary," she coldly said; and immediately turning to Hawkeye, added, "Generous hunter, from my soul I thank you. Your offer is vain, neither could it be accepted; but still you may serve me, even more than in your own noble intention. Look at that drooping, humbled child! Abandon her not until you leave her in the habitations of civilized men. I will not say," wringing the hard hand of the scout, "that her father will reward you—for such as you are above the rewards of men—but he will thank you and bless you. And believe me, the blessing of a just and aged man has virtue in the sight of Heaven. Would to God I could hear one from his lips at this awful moment!"

Her voice became choked, and for an instant she was silent; then advancing a step nigher to Duncan, who was supporting her unconscious sister, she continued, in more subdued tones, but in which feeling and the habits of her sex maintained a fearful struggle—"I need not tell you to cherish the treasure you will possess. You love her, Heyward; that would conceal a thousand faults, though she had them. She is kind, gentle, sweet, good, as mortal may be. There is not a blemish in mind or person at which the proudest of you all would sicken. She is fair—Oh! how surpassingly fair," laying her own beautiful but less brilliant hand in melancholy affection on the alabaster forehead of Alice, and parting the golden hair which clustered about her brows; "and yet her soul is pure and spotless as her skin. I could say much—more, perhaps, than cooler reason would approve; but I will spare you and myself—" Her voice became inaudible, and her face was

bent over the form of her sister. After a long and burning kiss she arose, and with features of the hue of death, but without even a tear in her feverish eye, she turned away, and added to the savage, with all her former elevation of manner—"Now, sir, if it be your pleasure, I will follow."

"Ay, go," cried Duncan, placing Alice in the arms of an Indian girl; "go, Magua, go. These Delawares have their laws, which forbid them to detain you; but I—I have no such obligation. Go, malignant monster—why do you delay?"

It would be difficult to describe the expression with which Magua listened to this threat to follow. There was at first a fierce and manifest display of joy, and then it was instantly subdued in a look of cunning coldness.

"The woods are open," he was content with answering. "'The Open Hand' can come."

"Hold," cried Hawkeye, seizing Duncan by the arm and detaining him by violence; "you know not the craft of the imp. He would lead you to an ambushment and your death——"

"Huron," interrupted Uncas, who, submissive to the stern customs of his people, had been an attentive and grave listener to all that passed; "Huron, the justice of the Delawares comes from the Manitto. Look at the sun. He is now in the upper branches of the hemlock. Your path is short and open. When he is seen above the trees there will be men on your trail."

"I hear a crow," exclaimed Magua, with a taunting laugh. "Go," he added, shaking his head at the crowd, which had slowly opened to admit his passage. "Where are the petticoats of the Delawares? Let them send their arrows and their guns to the Wyandots; they shall have venison to eat and corn to hoe. Dogs, rabbits, thieves—I spit on you."

His parting gibes were listened to in a dead, boding silence, and, with these biting words in his mouth, the triumphant Magua passed unmolested into the forest followed by his passive captive, and protected by the inviolable laws of Indian hospitality.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Flue. Kill the poys and the luggage! 'Tis expressly against the law of arms, 'tis as arrant a piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offered in the 'orld.

—KING HENRY V.

So long as their enemy and his victim continued in sight, the multitude remained motionless as beings charmed to the place by some power that was friendly to the Hurons; but the instant he disappeared, it became tossed and agitated by fierce and powerful passion. Uncas maintained his elevated stand, keeping his eyes on Cora, until the colors of her dress were blended with the foliage of the forest; when he descended, and moving silently through the throng, he disappeared in that lodge from which he had so recently issued. A few of the graver and more attentive warriors, who caught the gleams of anger that shot from the eyes of the young chief in passing, followed him to the place he had selected for his meditations. After which, Tamenund and Alice were removed, and the women and children were ordered to disperse. During the momentous hour that succeeded, the encampment resembled a hive of troubled bees, who only awaited the appearance and example of their leader to take some distant and momentous flight.

A young warrior at length issued from the lodge of Uncas; and moving deliberately, with a sort of grave march, towards a dwarf pine that grew in the crevices of the rocky terrace, he tore the bark from its body, and then returned whence he came without speaking. He was soon followed by another, who stripped the sapling of its branches, leaving it a naked and blazed* trunk. A third colored the post with stripes of a dark red paint; all which indications of a hostile design in the leaders of the nation were received by the men without in a gloomy and ominous silence. Finally, the Mohican himself reappeared, divested of all his attire except

* A tree which has been partially or entirely stripped of its bark is said, in the language of the country, to be "blazed." The term is strictly English, for a horse is said to be blazed when it has a white mark.

his girdle and leggings, and with one-half of his fine features hid under a cloud of threatening black.

Uncas moved with a slow and dignified tread towards the post, which he immediately commenced encircling with a measured step, not unlike an ancient dance, raising his voice at the same time in the wild and irregular chant of his war-song. The notes were in the extremes of human sounds, being sometimes melancholy and exquisitely plaintive, even rivaling the melody of birds—and then, by sudden and startling transitions, causing the auditors to tremble by their depth and energy. The words were few and often repeated, proceeding gradually from a sort of invocation or hymn to the Deity to an intimation of the warrior's objects, and terminating, as they commenced, with an acknowledgment of his own dependence on the Great Spirit. If it were possible to translate the comprehensive and melodious language in which he spoke, the ode might read something like the following—

"Manitto! Manitto! Manitto!
Thou art great, thou art good, thou art wise!
Manitto! Manitto!
Thou art just.

"In the heavens, in the clouds, oh! I see
Many spots—many dark, many red:
In the heavens, oh! I see
Many clouds.

"In the woods, in the air, oh! I hear
The whoop, the long yell, and the cry:
In the woods, oh! I hear
The loud whoop.

"Manitto! Manitto! Manitto!
I am weak—thou art strong; I am slow—
Manitto! Manitto!
Give me aid."

At the end of what might be called each verse, he made a pause, by raising a note louder and longer than common, that was peculiarly suited to the sentiment just expressed. The first close was solemn, and intended to convey the idea of veneration; the second descriptive, bordering on the alarming; and the third was the well-known and terrific war-whoop, which burst from the lips of the young warrior like a combination of all the frightful sounds of

battle. The last was like the first, humble and imploring. Three times did he repeat this song, and as often did he encircle the post in his dance.

At the close of the first turn, a grave and highly esteemed chief of the Lenape followed his example, singing words of his own, however, to music of a similar character. Warrior after warrior enlisted in the dance, until all of any renown and authority were numbered in its mazes. The spectacle now became wildly terrific; the fierce-looking and menacing visages of the chiefs receiving additional power from the appalling strains in which they mingled their guttural tones. Just then Uncas struck his tomahawk deep into the post, and raised his voice in a shout which might be termed his own battle-cry. The act announced that he had assumed the chief authority in the intended expedition.

It was a signal that awakened all the slumbering passions of the nation. A hundred youths, who had hitherto been restrained by the diffidence of their years, rushed in a frantic body on the fancied emblem of their enemy, and severed it asunder, splinter by splinter, until nothing remained of the trunk but its roots in the earth. During this moment of tumult, the most ruthless deeds of war were performed on the fragments of the tree, with as much apparent ferocity as if they were the living victims of the cruelty. Some were scalped; some received the keen and trembling axe; and others suffered by thrusts from the fatal knife. In short, the manifestations of zeal and fierce delight were so great and unequivocal that the expedition was declared to be a war of the nation.

The instant Uncas had struck the blow, he moved out of the circle, and cast his eyes up to the sun, which was just gaining the point when the truce with Magua was to end. The fact was soon announced by a significant gesture, accompanied by a corresponding cry; and the whole of the excited multitude abandoned their mimic warfare, with shrill yells of pleasure, to prepare for the more hazardous experiment of the reality.

The whole face of the encampment was

instantly changed. The warriors, who were already armed and painted, became as still as if they were incapable of any uncommon burst of emotion. On the other hand, the women broke out of the lodges, with the songs of joy and those of lamentation so strangely mingled, that it might have been difficult to have said which passion preponderated. None, however, were idle.

Some bore their choicest articles, others their young, and some their aged and infirm, into the forest, which spread itself like a verdant carpet of bright green against the side of the mountain. Thither Tamenund also retired, with calm composure, after a short and touching interview with Uncas, from whom the sage separated with the reluctance that a parent would quit a long lost and just recovered child. In the meantime, Duncan saw Alice to a place of safety, and then sought the scout, with a countenance that denoted how eagerly he also panted for the approaching contest.

But Hawkeye was too much accustomed to the war-song and the enlistments of the natives to betray any interest in the passing scene. He merely cast an occasional look at the number and quality of the warriors, who, from time to time, signified their readiness to accompany Uncas to the field. In this particular he was soon satisfied; for, as has been already seen, the power of the young chief quickly embraced every fighting man in the nation. After this material point was so satisfactorily decided, he dispatched an Indian boy in quest of "Kill-deer" and the rifle of Uncas, to the place where they had deposited the weapons on approaching the camp of the Delawares; a measure of double policy, inasmuch as it protected the arms from their own fate, if detained as prisoners, and gave them the advantage of appearing among the strangers rather as sufferers than as men provided with the means of defense and subsistence. In selecting another to perform the office of reclaiming his highly-prized rifle, the scout had lost sight of none of his habitual caution. He knew that Magua had not come unattended, and he also knew that

Huron spies watched the movements of their new enemies, along the whole boundary of the woods. It would, therefore, have been fatal to himself to have attempted the experiment; a warrior would have fared no better; but the danger of a boy would not be likely to commence until after his object was discovered. When Heyward joined him, the scout was coolly awaiting the result of this experiment.

The boy, who had been well instructed, and was sufficiently crafty, proceeded, with a bosom that was swelling with the pride of such a confidence, and all the hopes of young ambition, carelessly across the clearing to the wood, which he entered at a point at some little distance from the place where the guns were secreted. The instant, however, he was concealed by the foliage of the bushes his dusky form was to be seen gliding, like that of a serpent, towards the desired treasure. He was successful; and in another moment he appeared flying across the narrow opening that skirted the base of the terrace on which the village stood, with the velocity of an arrow, and bearing a prize in each hand. He had actually gained the crags and was leaping up their sides with incredible activity, when a shot from the woods showed how accurate had been the judgment of the scout. The boy answered it with a feeble but contemptuous shout; and immediately a second bullet was sent after him from another part of the cover. At the next instant he appeared on the level above, elevating his guns in triumph while he moved with the air of a conqueror towards the renowned hunter who had honored him by so glorious a commission.

Notwithstanding the lively interest Hawkeye had taken in the fate of his messenger, he received "Kill-deer" with a satisfaction that, momentarily, drove all other recollections from his mind. After examining the piece with an intelligent eye, and opening and shutting the pan some ten or fifteen times, and trying sundry other equally important experiments on the lock, he turned to the boy and demanded, with great manifestations of kindness, if he was hurt. The urchin

looked proudly up in his face, but made no reply.

"Ah! I see, lad, the knaves have barked your arm!" added the scout, taking up the limb of the patient sufferer, across which a deep flesh wound had been made by one of the bullets; "but a little bruised alder will act like a charm. In the meantime I will wrap it in a badge of wampum. You have commenced the business of a warrior early, my brave boy, and are likely to bear a plenty of honorable scars to your grave. I know many young men that have taken scalps who cannot show such a mark as this. Go," having bound up the arm; "you will be a chief!"

The lad departed, prouder of his flowing blood than the vainest courtier could be of his blushing ribbon; and stalked among the fellows of his age, an object of general admiration and envy.

But in a moment of so many serious and important duties, this single act of juvenile fortitude did not attract the general notice and commendation it would have received under milder auspices. It had, however, served to apprise the Delawares of the position and the intentions of their enemies. Accordingly a party of adventurers, better suited to the task than the weak though spirited boy, was ordered to dislodge the skulkers. The duty was soon performed; for most of the Hurons retired of themselves when they found they had been discovered. The Delawares followed to a sufficient distance from their own encampment, and then halted for orders, apprehensive of being led into an ambush. As both parties secreted themselves, the woods were again as still and quiet as a mild summer morning and deep solitude could render them.

The calm but still impatient Uncas now collected his chiefs and divided his power. He presented Hawkeye as a warrior often tried and always found deserving of confidence. When he found his friend met with a favorable reception, he bestowed on him the command of twenty men like himself, active, skillful and resolute. He gave the Delawares to understand the rank of Heyward among the troops of the Yengeese, and then tendered to him a trust

of equal authority. But Duncan declined the charge, professing his readiness to serve as a volunteer by the side of the scout. After this disposition, the young Mohican appointed various native chiefs to fill the different stations of responsibility, and the time pressing, he gave forth the word to march. He was cheerfully but silently obeyed by more than two hundred men.

Their entrance into the forest was perfectly unmolested; nor did they encounter any living objects that could either give the alarm or furnish the intelligence they needed until they came upon the lairs of their own scouts. Here a halt was ordered, and the chiefs were assembled to hold a "whispering council." At this meeting divers plans of operation were suggested, though none of a character to meet the wishes of their ardent leader. Had Uncas followed the prompting of his own inclinations, he would have led his followers to the charge without a moment's delay, and put the conflict to the hazard of an instant issue; but such a course would have been in opposition to all the received practices and opinions of his countrymen. He was, therefore, fain to adopt a caution that in the present temper of his mind he execrated, and to listen to advice at which his fiery spirit chafed, under the vivid recollection of Cora's danger and Magua's insolence.

After an unsatisfactory conference of many minutes, a solitary individual was seen advancing from the side of the enemy with such apparent haste as to induce the belief he might be a messenger charged with pacific overtures. When within a hundred yards, however, of the cover behind which the Delaware council had assembled, the stranger hesitated, appeared uncertain what course to take, and finally halted. All eyes were now turned on Uncas, as if seeking directions how to proceed.

"Hawkeye," said the young chief, in a low voice, "he must never speak to the Hurons again."

"His time has come," said the laconic scout, thrusting the long barrel of his rifle

through the leaves, and taking his deliberate and fatal aim. But, instead of pulling the trigger, he lowered the muzzle again, and indulged himself in a fit of his peculiar mirth. "I took the imp for a Mingo, as I'm a miserable sinner!" he said; "but when my eye ranged along his ribs for a place to get the bullet in—would you think it, Uncas—I saw the musicianer's blower! and so, after all, it is the man they call Gamut, whose death can profit no one, and whose life, if his tongue can do anything but sing, may be made serviceable to our own ends. If sounds have not lost their virtue, I'll soon have a discourse with the honest fellow, and that in a voice he'll find more agreeable than the speech of 'Kill-deer.'"

So saying, Hawkeye laid aside his rifle; and crawling through the bushes until within hearing of David, he attempted to repeat the musical effort which had conducted himself with so much safety and éclat through the Huron encampment. The exquisite organs of Gamut could not readily be deceived (and to say the truth, it would have been difficult for any other than Hawkeye to produce a similar noise), and consequently, having once before heard the sounds, he now knew whence they proceeded. The poor fellow appeared relieved from a state of embarrassment; for pursuing the direction of the voice—a task that to him was not much less arduous than it would have been to have gone up in the face of a battery—he soon discovered the hidden songster.

"I wonder what the Hurons will think of that!" said the scout, laughing, as he took his companion by the arm, and urged him towards the rear. "If the knaves lie within ear-shot, they will say there are two non-composers instead of one! But here we are safe," he added, pointing to Uncas and his associates. "Now give us the history of the Mingo inventions in natural English, and without any ups and downs of voice."

David gazed about him, at the fierce and wild-looking chiefs, in mute wonder; but assured by the presence of faces that he knew, he soon rallied his faculties so far as to make an intelligent reply.

"The heathen are abroad in goodly numbers," said David; "and, I fear, with evil intent. There has been much howling and ungodly revelry, together with such sounds as it is profanity to utter, in their habitations within the past hour; so much so, in truth, that I have fled to the Delawares in search of peace."

"Your ears might not have profited much by the exchange, had you been quicker of foot," returned the scout, a little dryly. "But let that be as it may; where are the Hurons?"

"They lie hid in the forest, between this spot and their village in such force that prudence would teach you instantly to return."

Uncas cast a glance along the range of trees which concealed his own band and mentioned the name of—

"Magua?"

"Is among them. He brought in the maiden that had sojourned with the Delawares, and leaving her in the cave has put himself, like a raging wolf, at the head of his savages. I know not what has troubled his spirit so greatly!"

"He has left her, you say, in the cave!" interrupted Heyward; "'tis well that we know its situation! May not something be done for her instant relief?"

Uncas looked earnestly at the scout before he asked—

"What says Hawkeye?"

"Give me my twenty rifles and I will turn to the right, along the stream; and passing by the huts of the beaver, will join the Sagamore and the colonel. You shall then hear the whoop from that quarter; with this wind one may easily send it a mile. Then, Uncas, do you drive in their front; when they come within range of our pieces we will give them a blow that, I pledge the good name of an old frontiersman, shall make their line bend like an ashen bow. After which we will carry their village, and take the women from the cave; when the affair may be finished with the tribe, according to a white man's battle, by a blow and a victory; or in the Indian fashion, with dodge and cover. There may be no great learning, major, in this plan, but with courage and patience it can all be done."

"I like it much," cried Duncan, who saw that the release of Cora was the primary object in the mind of the scout; "I like it much. Let it be instantly attempted."

After a short conference the plan was matured and rendered more intelligible to the several parties. The different signals were appointed, and the chiefs separated, each to his allotted station.

CHAPTER XXXII.

But plagues shall spread, and funeral fires increase,
Till the great king, without a ransom paid,
To her own Chrysa send the black-eyed maid.

—POPE.

DURING the time Uncas was making this disposition of his forces, the woods were as still, and, with the exception of those who had met in council, apparently as much untenanted, as when they came fresh from the hands of their Almighty Creator. The eye could range, in every direction, through the long and shadowed vistas of the trees; but nowhere was any object to be seen that did not properly belong to the peaceful and slumbering scenery. Here and there a bird was heard fluttering among the branches of the beeches, and occasionally a squirrel dropped a nut, drawing the startled looks of the party, for a moment, to the place; but the instant the casual interruption ceased, the passing air was heard murmuring above their heads, along that verdant and undulating surface of forest which spread itself unbroken, unless by stream or lake, over such a vast region of country. Across the track of wilderness, which lay between the Delawares and the village of their enemies, it seemed as if the foot of man had never trodden, so breathing and deep was the silence in which it lay. But Hawkeye, whose duty led him foremost in the adventure, knew the character of those with whom he was about to contend too well to trust the treacherous quiet.

When he saw his little band collected the scout threw "Kill-deer" into the hollow of his arm, and making a silent sig-

nal that he would be followed, he led them many rods towards the rear, into the bed of a little brook which they had crossed in advancing. Here he halted, and after waiting for the whole of his grave and attentive warriors to close about him, he spoke in Delaware, demanding—

"Do any of my young men know whither this run will lead us?"

A Delaware stretched forth a hand, with the two fingers separated, and indicating the manner in which they were joined at the root, he answered—

"Before the sun could go his own length the little water will be in the big." Then he added, pointing in the direction of the place he mentioned, "the two make enough for the beavers."

"I thought as much," returned the scout, glancing his eye upwards at the opening in the tree-tops, "from the course it takes and the bearings of the mountains. Men, we will keep within the cover of its banks till we scent the Hurons."

His companions gave the usual brief exclamation of assent, but perceiving that their leader was about to lead the way in person, one or two made signs that all was not as it should be. Hawkeye, who comprehended their meaning glances, turned, and perceived that his party had been followed thus far by the singing-master.

"Do you know, friend," asked the scout gravely, and perhaps with a little of the pride of conscious deserving in his manner, "that this is a band of rangers chosen for the most desperate service and put under the command of one who, though another might say it with a better face, will not be apt to leave them idle. It may not be five, it cannot be thirty minutes before we tread on the body of a Huron, living or dead."

"Though not admonished of your intentions in words," returned David, whose face was a little flushed, and whose ordinarily quiet and unmeaning eyes glimmered with an expression of unusual fire, "your men have reminded me of the children of Jacob going out to battle against the Shechemites for wickedly aspiring to wedlock with a woman of a race

that was favored of the Lord. Now, I have journeyed far, and sojourned much in good and evil with the maiden ye seek, and though not a man of war, with my loins girded and my sword sharpened, yet would I gladly strike a blow in her behalf."

The scout hesitated, as if weighing the chances of such a strange enlistment in his mind, before he answered—

"You know not the use of any we'pon. You carry no rifle; and believe me, what the Mingoes take they will freely give again."

"Though not a vaunting and bloodily-disposed Goliath," returned David, drawing a sling from beneath his parti-colored and uncouth attire, "I have not forgotten the example of the Jewish boy. With this ancient instrument of war have I practiced much in my youth, and peradventure the skill has not entirely departed from me."

"Ay!" said Hawkeye, considering the deer-skin thong and apron with a cold and discouraging eye; "the thing might do its work among arrows, or even knives; but these Mengwe have been furnished by the Frenchers with a good grooved barrel a man. However, it seems to be your gift to go unharmed amid fire; and as you have hitherto been favored—major, you have left your rifle at a cock; a single shot before the time would be just twenty scalps lost to no purpose—singer, you can follow; we may find use for you in the shoutings."

"I thank you, friend," returned David, supplying himself, like his royal namesake, from among the pebbles of the brook; "though not given to the desire to kill, had you sent me away my spirit would have been troubled."

"Remember," added the scout, tapping his own head significantly on that spot where Gamut was yet sore, "we come to fight, and not to musikate. Until the general whoop is given, nothing speaks but the rifle."

David nodded, as much as to signify his acquiescence with the terms; and then Hawkeye, casting another observant glance over his followers, made the signal to proceed.

Their route lay, for the distance of a mile, along the bed of the water-course. Though protected from any great danger of observation by the precipitous banks, and the thick shrubbery which skirted the stream, no precaution known to an Indian attack was neglected. A warrior rather crawled than walked on each flank, so as to catch occasional glimpses into the forest; and every few minutes the band came to a halt, and listened for hostile sounds, with an acuteness of organs that would be scarcely conceivable to a man in a less natural state. Their march was, however, unmolested, and they reached the point where the lesser stream was lost in the greater, without the smallest evidence that their progress had been noted. Here the scout again halted, to consult the signs of the forest.

"We are likely to have a good day for a fight," he said in English, addressing Heyward, and glancing his eye upwards at the clouds, which began to move in broad sheets across the firmament; "a bright sun and a glittering barrel are no friends to true sight. Everything is favorable; they have the wind, which will bring down their noises and their smoke, too, no little matter in itself; whereas, with us it will be first a shot, and then a clear view. But here is an end of our cover; the beavers have had the range of this stream for hundreds of years, and what atween their food and their dams, there is, as you see, many a girdled stub, but few living trees."

Hawkeye had, in these few words, given no bad description of the prospect that now lay in their front. The brook was irregular in its width, sometimes shooting through narrow fissures in the rocks, and at others spreading over acres of bottom land, forming little areas that might be termed ponds. Everywhere along its banks were the moldering relics of dead trees, in all the stages of decay, from those that groaned on their tottering trunks to such as had recently been robbed of those rugged coats that so mysteriously contain their principle of life. A few long, low, and moss-covered piles were scattered among them, like the memorials

of a former and long-departed generation.

All these minute particulars were noted by the scout with a gravity and interest that they probably had never before attracted. He knew that the Huron encampment lay a short half mile up the brook; and, with the characteristic anxiety of one who dreaded a hidden danger, he was greatly troubled at not finding the smallest trace of the presence of his enemy. Once or twice he felt induced to give the order for a rush, and to attempt the village by surprise; but his experience quickly admonished him of the danger of so useless an experiment. Then he listened intently, and with painful uncertainty, for the sounds of hostility in the quarter where Uncas was left; but nothing was audible except the sighing of the wind, that began to sweep over the bosom of the forest in gusts which threatened a tempest. At length, yielding rather to his unusual impatience than taking counsel from his knowledge, he determined to bring matters to an issue, by unmasking his force, and proceeding cautiously but steadily up the stream.

The scout had stood, while making his observations, sheltered by a brake, and his companions still lay in the bed of the ravine, through which the smaller stream debouched; but on hearing his low though intelligible signal, the whole party stole up the bank, like so many dark specters, and silently arranged themselves around him. Pointing in the direction he wished to proceed, Hawkeye advanced, the band breaking off in single files, and following so accurately in his footsteps as to leave it, if we except Heyward and David, the trail of but a single man.

The party was, however, scarcely uncovered before a volley from a dozen rifles was heard in their rear; and a Delaware, leaping high into the air, like a wounded deer, fell at his whole length, perfectly dead.

"Ah! I feared some devilry like this!" exclaimed the scout, in English; adding with the quickness of thought, in his adopted tongue, "To cover, men, and charge!"

The band dispersed at the word, and before Heyward had well recovered from his surprise, he found himself standing alone with David. Luckily, the Hurons had already fallen back, and he was safe from their fire. But this state of things was evidently to be of short continuance, for the scout set the example of pressing on their retreat, by discharging his rifle and darting from tree to tree as his enemy slowly yielded ground.

It would seem that the assault had been made by a very small party of the Hurons, which, however, continued to increase in numbers as it retired on its friends, until the return fire was very nearly, if not quite, equal to that maintained by the advancing Delawares. Heyward threw himself among the combatants and, imitating the necessary caution of his companions, he made quick discharges with his own rifle. The contest now grew warm and stationary. Few were injured, as both parties kept their bodies as much protected as possible by the trees; never, indeed, exposing any part of their persons except in the act of taking aim. But the chances were gradually growing unfavorable to Hawkeye and his band. The quick-sighted scout perceived his danger, without knowing how to remedy it. He saw it was more dangerous to retreat than to maintain his ground, while he found his enemy throwing out men on his flank, which rendered the task of keeping themselves covered so very difficult to the Delawares as nearly to silence their fire. At this embarrassing moment, when they began to think the whole of the hostile tribe was gradually encircling them, they heard the yell of combatants and the rattling of arms echoing under the arches of the wood, at the place where Uncas was posted, a bottom which, in a manner, lay beneath the ground on which Hawkeye and his party were contending.

The effects of this attack were instantaneous, and to the scout and his friends greatly relieving. It would seem that, while his own surprise had been anticipated, and had consequently failed, the enemy, in their turn, having been deceived in its object and in his numbers, had left

too small a force to resist the impetuous onset of the young Mohican. This fact was doubly apparent, by the rapid manner in which the battle in the forest rolled upwards towards the village, and by an instant falling off in the number of their assailants, who rushed to assist in maintaining the front, and, as it now proved to be, the principal point of defense.

Animating his followers by his voice and his own example, Hawkeye then gave the word to bear down upon their foes. The charge, in that rude species of warfare, consisted merely in pushing from cover to cover, nigher to the enemy; and in this maneuver he was instantly and successfully obeyed. The Hurons were compelled to withdraw, and the scene of the contest rapidly changed from the more open ground on which it had commenced, to the spot where the assailed found a thicket to rest upon. Here the struggle was protracted, arduous, and, seemingly, of doubtful issue; the Delawares, though none of them fell, beginning to bleed freely, in consequence of the disadvantage at which they were held.

In this crisis, Hawkeye found means to get behind the same tree as that which served for a cover to Heyward; most of his own combatants being within call, a little on his right, where they maintained rapid though fruitless discharges on their sheltered enemies.

"You are a young man, major," said the scout, dropping the butt of "Killdeer" to the earth and leaning on the barrel, a little fatigued with his previous industry; "and it may be your gift to lead armies, at some future day, ag'in these imps, the Mingoes. You may here see the philosophy of an Indian fight. It consists mainly in a ready hand, a quick eye and a good cover. Now, if you had a company of the Royal Americans here, in what manner would you set them to work in this business?"

"The bayonet would make a road," replied Duncan.

"Ay, there is white reason in what you say; but a man must ask himself, in this wilderness, how many lives he can spare.

No—horse,"* continued the scout, shaking his head, like one who mused; "horse, I am ashamed to say, must, sooner or later, decide these scimmages. The brutes are better than men, and to horse must we come at last. Put a shodden hoof on the moccasin of red-skin; and if his rifle be once emptied he will never stop to load it again."

"This is a subject that might better be discussed another time," returned Heyward; "shall we charge?"

"I see no contradiction to the gifts of any man in passing his breathing spells in useful reflections," the scout replied. "As to a rush I little relish such a measure; for a scalp or two must be thrown away in the attempt. And yet," he added, bending his head aside to catch the sounds of the distant combat, "if we are to be of use to Uncas, these knaves in our front must be got rid of!"

Then turning with a prompt and decided air he called aloud to his Indians in their own language. His words were answered by a shout; and, at a given signal, each warrior made a swift movement around his particular tree. The sight of so many dark bodies glancing before their eyes at the same instant drew a hasty, and consequently an ineffectual fire from the Hurons. Without stopping to breathe the Delawares leaped, in long bounds, towards the woods, like so many panthers springing upon their prey. Hawkeye was in front, brandishing his terrible rifle, and animating his followers by his example. A few of the older and more cunning Hurons, who had not been deceived by the artifice which had been practiced to draw their fire, now made a close and deadly

* The American forest admits of the passage of horse, there being little underbrush and few tangled brakes. The plan of Hawkeye is the one which has always proved the most successful in the battles between the whites and the Indians. Wayne, in his celebrated campaign on the Miami, received the fire of his enemies in line; and then causing his dragoons to wheel round his flanks, the Indians were driven from their covers before they had time to load. One of the most conspicuous of the chiefs who fought in the battle of Miami assured the writer that the red men could not fight the warriors with "long knives and leather stockings;" meaning the dragoons with their sabers and boots.

discharge of their pieces, and justified the apprehensions of the scout by felling three of his foremost warriors. But the shock was insufficient to repel the impetus of the charge. The Delawares broke into the cover with the ferocity of their natures, and swept away every trace of resistance by the fury of the onset.

The combat endured only for an instant, hand to hand, and then the assailed yielded ground rapidly, until they reached the opposite margin of the thicket, where they clung to the cover with the sort of obstinacy that is so often witnessed in hunted brutes. At this critical moment, when the success of the struggle was again becoming doubtful, the crack of a rifle was heard behind the Hurons, and a bullet came whizzing from among some beaver lodges, which were situated in the clearing, in their rear, and was followed by the fierce and appalling yell of the war-whoop.

"There speaks the Sagamore!" shouted Hawkeye, answering the cry with his own stentorian voice; "we have them now in face and back!"

The effect on the Hurons was instantaneous. Discouraged by an assault from a quarter that left them no opportunity for cover, their warriors uttered a common yell of disappointment, and breaking off in a body, they spread themselves across the opening, heedless of every consideration but flight. Many fell, in making the experiment, under the bullets and blows of the pursuing Delawares.

We shall not pause to detail the meeting between the scout and Chingachgook, or the more touching interview that Duncan held with Munro. A few brief and hurried words served to explain the state of things to both parties; and then Hawkeye, pointing out the Sagamore to his band, resigned the chief authority into the hands of the Mohican chief. Chingachgook assumed the station to which his birth and experience gave him so distinguished a claim, with the grave dignity that always gives force to the mandates of a native warrior. Following the footsteps of the scout, he led the party back through the thicket, his men scalping the fallen Hurons and secreting the bodies of

their own dead as they proceeded, until they gained a point where the former was content to make a halt.

The warriors, who had breathed themselves freely in the preceding struggle, were now posted on a bit of level ground, sprinkled with trees in sufficient numbers to conceal them. The land fell away rather precipitately in front, and beneath their eyes stretched for several miles a narrow, dark and wooded vale. It was through this dense and dark forest that Uncas was still contending with the main body of the Hurons.

The Mohican and his friends advanced to the brow of the hill, and listened with practiced ears to the sounds of the combat. A few birds hovered over the leafy bosom of the valley, frightened from their secluded nests, and here and there a light vapory cloud, which seemed already blending with the atmosphere, arose above the trees, and indicated some spot where the struggle had been fierce and stationary.

"The fight is coming up the ascent," said Duncan, pointing in the direction of a new explosion of fire-arms; "we are too much in the center of their line to be effective."

"They will incline into the hollow, where the cover is thicker," said the scout, "and that will leave us well on their flank. Go, Sagamore; you will hardly be in time to give the whoop, and lead on the young men. I will fight the scrimmage with warriors of my own color. You know me, Mohican; not a Huron of them all shall cross the swell, into your rear, without the notice of 'Kill-deer.'"

The Indian chief paused another moment to consider the signs of the contest, which was now rolling rapidly up the ascent, a certain evidence that the Delawares triumphed; nor did he actually quit the place until admonished of the proximity of his friends, as well as enemies, by the bullets of the former, which began to patter among the dried leaves on the ground, like the bits of falling hail which precede the bursting of the tempest. Hawkeye and his three companions withdrew a pace to a shelter, and awaited

the issue with calmness, that nothing but great practice could impart in such a scene.

It was not long before the reports of the rifles began to lose the echoes of the woods, and to sound like weapons discharged in the open air. Then a warrior appeared, here and there, driven to the skirts of the forest, and rallying as he entered the clearing, as at the place where the final stand was to be made. These were soon joined by others, until a long line of swarthy figures was to be seen clinging to the cover with the obstinacy of desperation. Heyward began to grow impatient, and turned his eyes anxiously in the direction of Chingachgook. The chief was seated on a rock, with nothing visible but his calm visage, considering the spectacle with an eye as deliberate as if he were posted there merely to view the struggle.

"The time is come for the Delaware to strike!" said Duncan.

"Not so, not so," returned the scout; "when he scents his friends, he will let them know that he is here. See, see; the knaves are getting in that clump of pines, like bees settling after their flight. By the Lord, a squaw might put a bullet into the center of such a knot of dark-skins!"

At that instant the whoop was given, and a dozen Hurons fell by a discharge from Chingachgook and his band. The shout that followed was answered by a single war-cry from the forest, and a yell passed through the air that sounded as if a thousand throats were united in a common effort. The Hurons staggered, deserted the center of their line, and Uncas issued from the forest through the opening they left, at the head of a hundred warriors.

Waving his hands right and left, the young chief pointed out the enemy to his followers, who separated in pursuit. The war now divided, both wings of the broken Hurons seeking protection in the woods again, hotly pressed by the victorious warriors of the Lenape. A minute might have passed, but the sounds were already receding in different directions, and gradually losing their distinctness beneath the

echoing arches of the woods. One little knot of Hurons, however, had disdained to seek a cover, and were retiring, like lions at bay, slowly and suddenly up the acclivity which Chingachgook and his band had just deserted to mingle more closely in the fray. Magua was conspicuous in this party, both by his fierce and savage mien, and by the air of haughty authority he yet maintained.

In his eagerness to expedite the pursuit, Uncas had left himself nearly alone; but the moment his eye caught the figure of *Le Subtil*, every other consideration was forgotten. Raising his cry of battle, which recalled some six or seven warriors, and reckless of the disparity of their numbers, he rushed upon his enemy. *Le Renard*, who watched the movement, paused to receive him with secret joy. But at the moment when he thought the rashness of his impetuous young assailant had left him at his mercy, another shout was given, and *La longue Carabine* was seen rushing to the rescue, attended by all his white associates. The Huron instantly turned, and commenced a rapid retreat up the ascent.

There was no time for greetings or congratulations; for Uncas, though unconscious of the presence of his friends, continued the pursuit with the velocity of the wind. In vain Hawkeye called to him to respect the covers; the young Mohican braved the dangerous fire of his enemies, and soon compelled them to flight as swift as his own headlong speed. It was fortunate that the race was of short continuance, and that the white men were much favored by their position, or the Delaware would soon have outstripped all his companions and fallen a victim to his own temerity. But ere such a calamity could happen, the pursuers and pursued entered the Wyandot village, within striking distance of each other.

Excited by the presence of their dwellings, and tired of the chase, the Hurons now made a stand, and fought around their council lodge with the fury of despair. The onset and the issue were like the passage and destruction of a whirlwind. The tomahawk of Uncas, the

blows of Hawkeye, and even the still nervous arm of Munro, were all busy for that passing moment, and the ground was quickly strewn with their enemies. Still Magua, though daring and much exposed, escaped from every effort against his life, with that sort of fabled protection that was made to overlook the fortunes of favored heroes in the legends of ancient poetry. Raising a yell that spoke volumes of anger and disappointment, the subtle chief, when he saw his comrades fallen, darted away from the place, attended by his two only surviving friends, leaving the Delawares engaged in stripping the dead of the bloody trophies of their victory.

But Uncas, who had vainly sought him in the *mêlée*, bounded forward in pursuit, Hawkeye, Heyward and David still pressing on his footsteps. The utmost that the scout could effect was to keep the muzzle of his rifle a little in advance of his friend, to whom, however, it answered every purpose of a charmed shield. Once Magua appeared disposed to make another and a final effort to revenge his losses; but, abandoning his intention as soon as demonstrated, he leaped into a thicket of bushes, through which he was followed by his enemies, and suddenly entered the mouth of the cave already known to the reader. Hawkeye, who had only forbore to fire in tenderness to Uncas, raised a shout of success, and proclaimed aloud that now they were certain of their game. The pursuers dashed into the long and narrow entrance, in time to catch a glimpse of the retreating forms of the Hurons. Their passage through the natural galleries and subterranean apartments of the cavern was preceded by the shrieks and cries of hundreds of women and children. The place, seen by its dim and uncertain light, appeared like the shades of the infernal regions, across which unhappy ghosts and savage demons were fitting in multitudes.

Still Uncas kept his eye on Magua, as if life to him possessed but a single object. Heyward and the scout still pressed on his rear, actuated, though possibly in a less degree, by a common feeling. But

their way was becoming intricate, in those dark and gloomy passages, and the glimpses of the retiring warriors less distinct and frequent; and for a moment the trace was believed to be lost, when a white robe was seen fluttering in the further extremity of a passage that seemed to lead up the mountain.

"'Tis Cora!" exclaimed Heyward, in a voice in which horror and delight were wildly mingled.

"Cora! Cora!" echoed Uncas, bounding forward like a deer.

"'Tis the maiden!" shouted the scout. "Courage, lady; we come!—we come!"

The chase was renewed with a diligence rendered tenfold encouraging by this glimpse of the captive. But the way was rugged, broken, and in spots nearly impassable. Uncas abandoned his rifle and leaped forward with headlong precipitation. Heyward rashly imitated his example, though both were, a moment afterwards, admonished of its madness by hearing the bellowing of a piece that the Hurons found time to discharge down the passage in the rocks, the bullets from which even gave the young Mohican a slight wound.

"We must close!" said the scout, passing his friends by a desperate leap; "the knaves will pick us all off at this distance; and see, they hold the maiden so as to shield themselves!"

Though his words were unheeded, or rather unheard, his example was followed by his companions, who, by incredible exertions, got near enough to the fugitives to perceive that Cora was borne along between the two warriors while Magua prescribed the direction and manner of their flight. At this moment the forms of all four were strongly drawn against an opening in the sky and they disappeared. Nearly frantic with disappointment, Uncas and Heyward increased efforts that already seemed superhuman, and they issued from the cavern on the side of the mountain in time to note the route of the pursued. The course lay up the ascent and still continued hazardous and laborious.

Encumbered by his rifle, and, perhaps, not sustained by so deep an interest in the

captive as his companions, the scout suffered the latter to precede him a little, Uncas, in his turn, taking the lead of Heyward. In this manner rocks, precipices and difficulties were surmounted in an incredibly short space, that at another time and under other circumstances would have been deemed almost insuperable. But the impetuous young men were rewarded by finding that, encumbered with Cora, the Hurons were losing ground in the race.

"Stay, dog of the Wyandots!" exclaimed Uncas, shaking his bright tomahawk at Magua; "a Delaware girl calls stay!"

"I will go no further," cried Cora, stopping unexpectedly on a ledge of rocks that overhung a deep precipice at no great distance from the summit of the mountain. "Kill me as thou wilt, detestable Huron; I will go no further."

The supporters of the maiden raised their ready tomahawks with the impious joy that fiends are thought to take in mischief, but Magua stayed the uplifted arms. The Huron chief, after casting the weapons he had wrested from his companions over the rock, drew his knife and turned to his captive with a look in which conflicting passions fiercely contended.

"Woman," he said, "choose; the wigwam or the knife of Le Subtil!"

Cora regarded him not, but, dropping on her knees, she raised her eyes and stretched her arms towards heaven, saying in a meek and yet confiding voice—

"I am thine! do with me as thou seest best!"

"Woman," repeated Magua, hoarsely, and endeavoring in vain to catch a glance from her serene and beaming eye, "choose!"

But Cora neither heard nor heeded his demand. The form of the Huron trembled in every fiber, and he raised his arm on high, but dropped it again with a bewildered air, like one who doubted. Once more he struggled with himself and lifted the keen weapon again—but just then a piercing cry was heard above them, and Uncas appeared, leaping frantically from a fearful height upon the ledge. Magua

recoiled a step; and one of his assistants, profiting by the chance, sheathed his own knife in the bosom of Cora.

The Huron sprang like a tiger on his offending and already retreating countryman, but the falling form of Uncas separated the unnatural combatants. Diverted from his object by this interruption, and maddened by the murder he had just witnessed, Magua buried his weapon in the back of the prostrate Delaware, uttering an unearthly shout as he committed the dastardly deed. But Uncas arose from the blow, as the wounded panther turns upon his foe, and struck the murderer of Cora to his feet by an effort in which the last of his failing strength was expended. Then, with a stern and steady look, he turned to Le Subtil, and indicated, by the expression of his eye, all that he would do, had not the power deserted him. The latter seized the nerveless arm of the unresisting Delaware, and passed his knife into his bosom three several times, before his victim, still keeping his gaze riveted on his enemy with a look of inextinguishable scorn, fell dead at his feet.

"Mercy! mercy! Huron!" cried Heyward from above, in tones nearly choked by horror; "give mercy, and thou shalt receive it!"

Whirling the bloody knife up at the imploring youth, the victorious Magua uttered a cry so fierce, so wild, and yet so joyous, that it conveyed the sounds of savage triumph to the ears of those who fought in the valley, a thousand feet below. He was answered by a burst from the lips of the scout, whose tall person was just then seen moving swiftly towards him, along those dangerous crags, with steps as bold and reckless as if he possessed the power to move in air. But when the hunter reached the scene of the ruthless massacre, the ledge was tenanted only by the dead.

His keen eye took a single look at the victims, and then shot its glances over the difficulties of the ascent in his front. A form stood at the brow of the mountain, on the very edge of the giddy height, with uplifted arms, in an awful attitude of menace. Without stopping to consider

his person, the rifle of Hawkeye was raised; but a rock, which fell on the head of one of the fugitives below, exposed the indignant and glowing countenance of the honest Gamut. Then Magua issued from a crevice, and stepping with calm indifference over the body of the last of his associates, he leaped a wide fissure, and ascended the rocks at a point where the arm of David could not reach him. A single bound would carry him to the brow of the precipice, and assure his safety. Before taking the leap, however, the Huron paused, and shaking his hand at the scout, he shouted—

“The pale-faces are dogs! the Delawares’ women! Magua leaves them on the rocks, for the crows!”

Laughing hoarsely, he made a desperate leap, and fell short of his mark, though his hands grasped a shrub on the verge of the height. The form of Hawkeye had crouched like a beast about to take its spring, and his frame trembled so violently with eagerness that the muzzle of the half-raised rifle played like a leaf fluttering in the wind. Without exhausting himself with fruitless efforts, the cunning Magua suffered his body to drop to the length of his arms, and found a fragment for his feet to rest on. Then summoning all his powers, he renewed the attempt, and so far succeeded as to draw his knees on the edge of the mountain. It was now, when the body of his enemy was most collected together, that the agitated weapon of the scout was drawn to his shoulder. The surrounding rocks themselves were not steadier than the piece became for the single instant that it poured out its contents. The arms of the Huron relaxed, and his body fell back a little, while his knees still kept their position. Turning a relentless look on his enemy, he shook a hand in grim defiance. But his hold-loosened, and his dark person was seen cutting the air with his head downwards, for a fleeting instant, until it glided past the fringe of shrubbery which clung to the mountains, in its rapid flight to destruction.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

They fought—like brave men, long and well,
They piled that ground with Moslem slain,
They conquered—but Bozzaris fell
Bleeding at every vein.
His few surviving comrades saw
His smile when rang their proud hurrah,
And the red field was won;
Then saw in death his eyelids close
Calmly, as to a night’s repose,
Like flowers at set of sun.

—HALLECK.

THE sun found the Lenape, on the succeeding day, a nation of mourners. The sounds of the battle were over, and they had fed fat their ancient grudge, and had avenged their recent quarrel, with the Mengwe, by the destruction of a whole community. The black and murky atmosphere that floated around the spot where the Hurons had encamped sufficiently announced of itself the fate of that wandering tribe; while hundreds of ravens, that struggled above the bleak summits of the mountains, or swept, in noisy flocks, across the wide ranges of the woods, furnished a frightful direction to the scene of the combat. In short, any eye, at all practiced in the signs of a frontier warfare, might easily have traced all those unerring evidences of the ruthless results which attend an Indian vengeance.

Still, the sun rose on the Lenape a nation of mourners. No shouts of success, no songs of triumph were heard, in rejoicings for their victory. The latest straggler had returned from his fell employment, only to strip himself of his bloody calling, and to join in the lamentations of his countrymen as a stricken people. Pride and exultation were supplanted by humility, and the fiercest of human passions was already succeeded by the most profound and unequivocal demonstrations of grief.

The lodges were deserted; but a broad belt of earnest faces encircled a spot in their vicinity whither everything possessing life had repaired and where all were now collected in deep and awful silence. Though beings of every rank and age, of both sexes and of all pursuits, had united to form this breathing wall of bodies, they were influenced by a single emotion. Each

eye was riveted on the center of that ring, which contained the objects of so much, and of so common, an interest.

Six Delaware girls, with their long, dark, flowing tresses falling loosely across their bosoms, stood apart, and only gave proofs of their existence as they occasionally strewed sweet-scented herbs and forest flowers on a litter of fragrant plants that, under a pall of Indian robes, supported all that now remained of the ardent, high-souled and generous Cora. Her form was concealed in many wrappers of the same simple manufacture, and her face was shut forever from the gaze of men. At her feet was seated the desolate Munro. His aged head was bowed nearly to the earth in compelled submission to the stroke of Providence; but a hidden anguish struggled about his furrowed brow that was only partially concealed by the careless locks of gray that had fallen, neglected, on his temples. Gamut stood at his side, his meek head bared to the rays of the sun, while his eyes, wandering and concerned, seemed to be equally divided between that little volume, which contained so many quaint but holy maxims, and the being in whose behalf his soul yearned to administer consolation. Heyward was also nigh, supporting himself against a tree and endeavoring to keep down those sudden risings of sorrow that it required his utmost manhood to subdue.

But sad and melancholy as this group may easily be imagined, it was far less touching than another, that occupied the opposite space of the same area. Seated as in life, with his form and limbs arranged in grave and decent composure, Uncas appeared, arrayed in the most gorgeous ornaments that the tribe could furnish. Rich plumes nodded above his head; wampum, gorgets, bracelets and medals adorned his person in profusion; though his dull eye and vacant lineaments too strongly contradicted the idle tale of pride they would convey.

Directly in front of the corpse Chingachgook was placed, without arms, paint or adornment of any sort, except the bright blue blazonry of his race, that was indelibly impressed on his naked bosom.

During the long period that the tribe had been thus collected, the Mohican warrior had kept a steady, anxious look on the cold and senseless countenance of his son. So riveted and intense had been that gaze and so changeless his attitude, that a stranger might not have told the living from the dead, but for the occasional gleamings of a troubled spirit that shot athwart the dark visage of one, and the death calm that had forever settled on the lineaments of the other.

The scout was hard by, leaning in a pensive posture on his own fatal and avenging weapon; while Tamemund, supported by the elders of his nation, occupied a high place at hand, whence he might look down on the mute and sorrowful assemblage of his people.

Just within the inner edge of the circle stood a soldier, in the military attire of a strange nation; and without it was his war-horse, in the center of a collection of mounted domestics, seemingly in readiness to undertake some distant journey. The vestments of the stranger announced him to be one who held a responsible situation near the person of the Captain of the Canadas; and who, as it would now seem, finding his errand of peace frustrated by the fierce impetuosity of his allies, was content to become a silent and sad spectator of the fruits of a contest that he had arrived too late to anticipate.

The day was drawing to the close of its first quarter, and yet had the multitude maintained its breathing stillness since its dawn. No sound louder than a stifled sob had been heard among them, nor had even a limb been moved throughout that long and painful period, except to perform the simple and touching offerings, that were made, from time to time, in commemoration of the dead. The patience and forbearance of Indian fortitude could alone support such an appearance of abstraction as seemed now to have turned each dark and motionless figure into stone.

At length the sage of the Delawares stretched forth an arm, and leaning on the shoulders of his attendants, he arose with an air as feeble as if another age had

already intervened between the man who had met his nation the preceding day, and him who now tottered on his elevated stand.

"Men of the Lenape!" he said, in hollow tones, that sounded like a voice charged with some prophetic mission; "the face of the Manitto is behind a cloud! his eye is turned from you; his ears are shut; his tongue gives no answer. You see him not; yet his judgments are before you. Let your hearts be open, and your spirits tell no lie. Men of the Lenape! the face of the Manitto is behind a cloud."

As this simple and yet terrible annunciation stole on the ears of the multitude, a stillness as deep and awful succeeded as if the venerated spirit they worshiped had uttered the words without the aid of human organs; and even the inanimate Uncas appeared a being of life, compared with the humbled and submissive throng by whom he was surrounded. As the immediate effect, however, gradually passed away, a low murmur of voices commenced a sort of chant in honor of the dead. The sounds were those of females, and were thrillingly soft and wailing. The words were connected by no regular continuation, but as one ceased another took up the eulogy, or lamentation, whichever it might be called, and gave vent to her emotions in such language as was suggested by her feelings and the occasion. At intervals the speaker was interrupted by general and loud bursts of sorrow, during which the girls around the bier of Cora plucked the plants and flowers blindly from her body, as if bewildered with grief. But, in the milder moments of their plaint, these emblems of purity and sweetness were cast back to their places, with every sign of tenderness and regret. Though rendered less connected by many and general interruptions and outbreaks, a translation of their language would have contained a regular descant, which, in substance, might have proved to possess a train of consecutive ideas.

A girl, selected for the task by her rank and qualifications, commenced by modest allusions to the qualities of the deceased warrior, embellishing her expressions

with those oriental images that the Indians have probably brought with them from the extremes of the other continent, and which form of themselves a link to connect the ancient histories of the two worlds. She called him the "panther of his tribe;" and described him as one whose moccasins left no trail on the dews; whose bound was like the leap of the young fawn; whose eye was brighter than a star in the dark night; and whose voice in battle was loud as the thunder of the Manitto. She reminded him of the mother who bore him, and dwelt forcibly on the happiness she must feel in possessing such a son. She bade him tell her, when they met in the world of spirits, that the Delaware girls had shed tears above the grave of her child, and had called her blessed.

Then they who succeeded changing their tones to a milder and still more tender strain, alluded, with the delicacy and sensitiveness of women, to the stranger maiden, who had left the upper earth at a time so near his own departure as to render the will of the Great Spirit too manifest to be disregarded. They admonished him to be kind to her, and to have consideration for her ignorance of those arts which were so necessary to the comfort of a warrior like himself. They dwelt upon her matchless beauty, and on her noble resolution, without the taint of envy, and as angels may be thought to delight in a superior excellence; adding that these endowments should prove more than equivalent for any little imperfections in her education.

After which, others again, in due succession, spoke to the maiden herself in the low, soft language of tenderness and love. They exhorted her to be of cheerful mind, and to fear nothing for her future welfare. A hunter would be her companion, who knew how to provide for her smallest wants; and a warrior was at her side who was able to protect her against every danger. They promised that her path should be pleasant and her burden light. They cautioned her against unavailing regrets for the friends of her youth and the scenes where her fathers had dwelt, assuring her that the "blessed hunting-grounds of the Lenape" contained vales as pleasant,

streams as pure and flowers as sweet as the "Heaven of the pale-faces." They advised her to be attentive to the wants of her companion, and never to forget the distinction which the Manitto had so wisely established between them. Then, in a wild burst of their chant, they sang with united voices the temper of the Mohican's mind. They pronounced him noble, manly and generous; all that became a warrior, and all that a maid might love. Clothing their ideas in the most remote and subtle images, they betrayed that, in the short period of their intercourse, they had discovered, with the intuitive perception of their sex, the truant disposition of his inclinations. The Delaware girls had found no favor in his eyes. He was of a race that had once been lords on the shores of the salt lake, and his wishes had led him back to a people who dwelt about the graves of his fathers. Why should not such a predilection be encouraged? That she was of a blood purer and richer than the rest of her nation, any eye might have seen; that she was equal to the dangers and daring of a life in the woods, her conduct had proved; and now, they added, the "wise one of the earth" had transplanted her to a place where she would find congenial spirits, and might be forever happy.

Then with another transition in voice and subject, allusions were made to the virgin who wept in the adjacent lodge. They compared her to flakes of snow; as pure, as white, as brilliant, and as liable to melt in the fierce heats of summer, or congeal in the frosts of winter. They doubted not that she was lovely in the eyes of the young chief, whose skin and whose sorrow seemed so like her own; but, though far from expressing such a preference, it was evident they deemed her less excellent than the maid they mourned. Still they denied her no need her rare charms might properly claim. Her ringlets were compared to the exuberant tendrils of the vine, her eye to the blue vault of the heavens, and the most spotless cloud, with its glowing flash of the sun, was admitted to be less attractive than her bloom.

During these and similar songs nothing was audible but the murmurs of the music; relieved, as it was, or rather rendered terrible, by those occasional bursts of grief which might be called its choruses. The Delawares themselves listened like charmed men; and it was very apparent, by the variations of their speaking countenances, how deep and true was their sympathy. Even David was not reluctant to lend his ears to the tone of voices so sweet; and long ere the chant was ended, his gaze announced that his soul was enthralled.

The scout, to whom alone, of all the white men, the words were intelligible, suffered himself to be aroused from his meditative posture, and bent his face aside, to catch their meaning, as the girls proceeded. But when they spoke of the future prospects of Cora and Uncas, he shook his head, like one who knew the error of their simple creed, and resuming his reclining attitude, he maintained it until the ceremony—if that might be called a ceremony, in which feeling was so deeply imbued—was finished. Happily for the self-command of both Heyward and Munro, they knew not the meaning of the wild sounds they heard.

Chingachgook was a solitary exception to the interest manifested by the native part of the audience. His look never changed throughout the whole of the scene, nor did a muscle move in his rigid countenance, even at the wildest or the most pathetic parts of the lamentation. The cold and senseless remains of his son was all to him, and every other sense but that of sight seemed frozen, in order that his eyes might take their final gaze at those lineaments he had so long loved, and which were now about to be closed forever from his view.

In this stage of the funeral obsequies, a warrior much renowned for deeds in arms, and more especially for services in the recent combat, a man of stern and grave demeanor, advanced slowly from the crowd and placed himself nigh the person of the dead.

"Why hast thou left us, pride of the Wapanachki?" he said, addressing him-

self to the dull ears of Uncas, as if the empty clay retained the faculties of the animated man; "thy time has been like that of the sun when in the trees; thy glory brighter than his light at noon-day. Thou art gone, youthful warrior, but a hundred Wyandots are clearing the briars from thy path to the world of spirits. Who that saw thee in battle could believe that thou couldst die? Who before thee has ever shown Uttawa the way into the fight? Thy feet were like the wings of eagles; thine arm heavier than fallen branches from the pine; and thy voice like the Manitto when he speaks in the clouds. The tongue of Uttawa is weak," he added, looking about him with a melancholy gaze, "and his heart exceeding heavy. Pride of the Wapanachki, why hast thou left us?"

He was succeeded by others, in due order, until most of the high and gifted men of the nation had sung or spoken their tribute of praise over the manes of the deceased chief. When each had ended, another deep and breathing silence reigned in all the place.

Then a low, deep sound was heard, like the suppressed accompaniment of distant music, rising just high enough on the air to be audible, and yet so indistinctly as to leave its character and the place whence it proceeded alike matters of conjecture. It was, however, succeeded by another and another strain, each in a higher key, until they grew on the ear, first in long-drawn and often repeated interjections, and finally in words. The lips of Chingachgook had so far parted as to announce that it was the monody of the father. Though not an eye was turned towards him, nor the smallest sign of impatience exhibited, it was apparent, by the manner in which the multitude elevated their heads to listen, that they drank in the sounds with an intenseness of attention that none but Tamenund himself had ever before commanded. But they listened in vain. The strains rose just so loud as to become intelligible, and then grew fainter and more trembling, until they finally sank on the ear, as if borne away by a passing breath of wind.

The lips of the Sagamore closed, and he remained silent in his seat, looking, with his riveted eye and motionless form, like some creature that had been turned from the Almighty hand with the form but without the spirit of a man. The Delawares, who knew by these symptoms that the mind of their friend was not prepared for so mighty an effort of fortitude, relaxed in their attention; and, with an innate delicacy, seemed to bestow all their thoughts on the obsequies of the stranger maiden.

A signal was given by one of the elder chiefs, to the women, who crowded that part of the circle near which the body of Cora lay. Obedient to the sign, the girls raised the bier to the elevation of their heads, and advanced with slow and regulated steps, chanting as they proceeded another wailing song in praise of the deceased. Gamut, who had been a close observer of rites he deemed so heathenish, now bent his head over the shoulder of the unconscious father, whispering—

"They move with the remains of thy child; shall we not follow, and see them interred with Christian burial?"

Munro started, as if the last trumpet had sounded in his ear, and bestowing one anxious and hurried glance around him, he arose and followed in the simple train, with the mien of a soldier, but bearing the full burden of a parent's suffering. His friends pressed around him with a sorrow that was too strong to be termed sympathy—even the young Frenchman joining in the procession, with the air of a man who was sensibly touched at the early and melancholy fate of one so lovely. But when the last and humblest female of the tribe had joined in the wild and yet ordered array, the men of the Lenape contracted their circle, and formed again, around the person of Uncas, as silent, as grave, and as motionless as before.

The place which had been chosen for the grave of Cora was a little knoll, where a cluster of young and healthful pines had taken root, forming of themselves a melancholy and appropriate shade over the spot. On reaching it the girls deposited their burden, and continued for many

minutes waiting, with characteristic patience and native timidity, for some evidence that they whose feelings were most concerned were content with the arrangement. At length the scout, who alone understood their habits, said, in their own language—

“My daughters have done well; the white men thank them.”

Satisfied with this testimony in their favor, the girls proceeded to deposit the body in a shell, ingeniously and not inelegantly fabricated of the bark of the birch; after which they lowered it into its dark and final abode. The ceremony of covering the remains, and concealing the marks of the fresh earth, by leaves and other natural and customary objects, was conducted with the same simple and silent forms. But when the labors of the kind friends who had performed these sad and friendly offices were so far completed, they hesitated, in a way to show that they knew not how much further they might proceed. It was in this stage of the rites that the scout again addressed them.

“My young women have done enough,” he said; “the spirit of a pale-face has no need of food or raiment—their gifts being according to the heaven of their color. I see,” he added, glancing an eye at David, who was preparing his book in a manner that indicated an intention to lead the way in sacred song, “that one who better knows the Christian fashions is about to speak.”

The females stood modestly aside, and, from having been the principal actors in the scene, they now became the meek and attentive observers of that which followed. During the time David was occupied in pouring out the pious feelings of his spirit in this manner, not a sign of surprise, nor a look of impatience, escaped them. They listened like those who knew the meaning of the strange words, and appeared as if they felt the mingled emotions of sorrow, hope and resignation they were intended to convey.

Excited by the scene he had just witnessed, and perhaps influenced by his own secret emotions, the master of song exceeded his usual efforts. His full, rich

voice was not found to suffer by a comparison with the soft tones of the girls; and his more modulated strains possessed, at least for the ears of those to whom they were peculiarly addressed, the additional power of intelligence. He ended the anthem as he had commenced it, in the midst of a grave and solemn stillness.

When, however, the closing cadence had fallen on the ears of his auditors, the secret, timorous glances of the eyes, and the general and yet subdued movement of the assemblage, betrayed that something was expected from the father of the deceased. Munro seemed sensible that the time was come for him to exert what is, perhaps, the greatest effort of which human nature is capable. He bared his gray locks and looked around the timid and quiet throng by which he was encircled with a firm and collected countenance. Then motioning with his hand for the scout to listen, he said:

“Say to these kind and gentle females that a heart-broken and failing man returns them his thanks. Tell them that the Being we all worship under different names will be mindful of their charity, and that the time shall not be distant when we may assemble around his throne without distinction of sex, or rank, or color.”

The scout listened to the tremulous voice in which the veteran delivered these words, and shook his head slowly when they were ended, as one who doubted their efficacy.

“To tell them this,” he said, “would be to tell them that the snows come not in winter, or that the sun shines fiercest when the trees are stripped of their leaves.”

Then turning to the women, he made such a communication of the other's gratitude as he deemed most suited to the capacities of his listeners. The head of Munro had already sunk upon his chest, and he was again fast relapsing into melancholy, when the young Frenchman before named ventured to touch him lightly on the elbow. As soon as he had gained the attention of the mourning old man he pointed towards a group of young

Indians, who approached with a light but closely covered litter, and then pointed upwards towards the sun.

"I understand you, sir," returned Munro, with a voice of forced firmness; "I understand you. It is the will of Heaven, and I submit. Cora, my child! if the prayers of a heart-broken father could avail thee now, how blessed shouldst thou be! Come, gentlemen," he added, looking about him with an air of lofty composure, though the anguish that quivered in his faded countenance was far too powerful to be concealed, "our duty here is ended; let us depart."

Heyward gladly obeyed a summons that took them from a spot where, each instant, he felt his self-control was about to desert him. While his companions were mounting, however, he found time to press the hand of the scout and to repeat the terms of an engagement they had made, to meet again within the post of the British army. Then gladly throwing himself into the saddle, he spurred his charge to the side of the litter, whence low and stifled sobs alone announced the presence of Alice. In this manner, the head of Munro again dropping on his bosom, with Heyward and David following in sorrowing silence and attended by the aide of Montcalm with his guard, all the white men, with the exception of Hawkeye, passed before the eyes of the Delawares, and were soon buried in the vast forests of that region.

But the tie which, through their common calamity, had united the feelings of these simple dwellers in the woods with the strangers who had thus transiently visited them, was not so easily broken. Years passed away before the traditionary tale of the white maiden, and of the young warrior of the Mohicans, ceased to beguile the long nights and tedious marches, or to animate their youthful and brave with a desire for vengeance. Neither were the secondary actors in these momentous incidents forgotten. Through the medium of the scout, who served for years afterwards as a link between them and civilized life, they learned, in answer to their inquiries, that the "Gray-head" was

speedily gathered to his fathers—borne down, as was erroneously believed, by his military misfortunes; and that the "Open Hand" had conveyed his surviving daughter far into the settlements of the "pale-faces," where her tears had at last ceased to flow, and had been succeeded by the bright smiles which were better suited to her joyous nature.

But these were events of a time later than that which concerns our tale. Deserted by all of his color, Hawkeye returned to the spot where his own sympathies led him, with a force that no ideal bond of union could bestow. He was just in time to catch a parting look of the features of Uncas, whom the Delawares were already inclosing in his last vestments of skins. They paused to permit the longing and lingering gaze of the sturdy woodsman, and when it was ended the body was enveloped, never to be unclosed again. Then came a procession like the other, and the whole nation was collected about the temporary grave of the chief—temporary, because it was proper, that at some future day, his bones should rest among those of his own people.

The movement, like the feeling, had been simultaneous and general. The same grave expression of grief, the same rigid silence, and the same deference to the principal mourner were observed around the place of interment as have been already described. The body was deposited in an attitude of repose, facing the rising sun, with the implements of war and of the chase at hand, in readiness for the final journey. An opening was left in the shell, by which it was protected from the soil, for the spirit to communicate with its earthly tenement, when necessary; and the whole was concealed from the instinct and protected from the ravages of the beasts of prey with an ingenuity peculiar to the natives. The manual rites then ceased, and all present reverted to the more spiritual part of the ceremonies.

Chingachgook became once more the object of the common attention. He had not yet spoken, and something consolatory and instructive was expected from so renowned a chief on an occasion of such interest.

Conscious of the wishes of the people, the stern and self-restrained warrior raised his face, which latterly had been buried in his robe, and looked about him with a steady eye. His firmly compressed and expressive lips then severed, and for the first time during the long ceremonies his voice was distinctly audible.

"Why do my brothers mourn?" he said, regarding the dark race of dejected warriors by whom he was environed; "why do my daughters weep? that a young man has gone to the happy hunting grounds, that a chief has filled his time with honor? He was good, he was dutiful, he was brave. Who can deny it? The Manitto had need of such a warrior, and he has called him away. As for me, the son and the father of Uncas, I am a blazed pine, in a clearing of the pale-faces. My race has gone from the shores of the salt lake and the hills of the Delawares. But who can say that the serpent of his tribe has forgotten his wisdom? I am alone——"

"No, no!" cried Hawkeye, who had been gazing with a yearning look at the rigid features of his friend, with something like his own self-command, but whose philosophy could endure no longer; "no, Sagamore, not alone. The gifts of colors may be different, but God has so placed us as to journey in the same path. I have no kin, and I may also say, like

you, no people. He was your son and a red-skin by nature; and it may be that your blood was nearer—but if ever I forget the lad who has so often fou't at my side in war, and slept at my side in peace, may he who has made us all, whatever may be our color or our gifts, forget me. The boy has left us for a time; but, Sagamore, you are not alone."

Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in that attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas like drops of falling rain.

In the midst of the awful stillness with which such a burst of feeling, coming as it did, from the two most renowned warriors of that region, was received, Tamenund lifted his voice to disperse the multitude.

"It is enough," he said. "Go, children of the Lenape; the anger of the Manitto is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red-men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."

THE PRAIRIE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE geological formation of that portion of the American Union which lies between the Alleghanies and the Rocky Mountains has given rise to many ingenious theories. Virtually, the whole of this immense region is a plain. For a distance extending nearly fifteen hundred miles east and west, and six hundred north and south, there is scarcely an elevation worthy to be called a mountain. Even hills are not common, though a good deal of the face of the country has more or less of that "rolling" character which is described in the opening pages of this work.

There is much reason to believe that the territory that now composes Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and a large portion of the country west of the Mississippi, lay formerly under water. The soil of all the former States has the appearance of an alluvial deposit; and isolated rocks have been found, of a nature and in situations which render it difficult to refute the opinion that they have been transferred to their present beds by floating ice. This theory assumes that the Great Lakes were the deep pools of one immense body of fresh water, which lay too low to be drained by the irruption that lay bare the land.

It will be remembered that the French, when masters of the Canadas and Louisiana, claimed the whole of the territory in question. Their hunters and advanced troops held the first communications with the savage occupants, and the earliest written accounts we possess of these vast regions are from the pens of their missionaries. Many French words have, conse-

quently, become of local use in this quarter of America, and not a few names given in that language have been perpetuated. When the adventurers who first penetrated these wilds met in the center of the forests, immense plains covered with rich verdure or rank grasses, they naturally gave them the appellation of meadows. As the English succeeded the French, and found a peculiarity of Nature, differing from all they had yet seen on the continent, already distinguished by a word that did not express anything in their own language, they left these natural meadows in possession of their title of convention. In this manner has the word "prairie" been adopted into the English tongue.

The American prairies are of two kinds. Those which lie east of the Mississippi are comparatively small, are exceedingly fertile, and are always surrounded by forests. They are susceptible of high cultivation, and are fast becoming settled. They abound in Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana. They labor under the disadvantages of a scarcity of wood and water—evils of a serious character, until Art has had time to supply the deficiencies of Nature. As coal is said to abound in all that region, and wells are generally successful, the enterprise of the immigrants is gradually prevailing against these difficulties.

The second description of these natural meadows lies west of the Mississippi, at a distance of a few hundred miles from that river, and is called the Great Prairies. They resemble the steppes of Tartary more than any other known portion of the world; being, in fact, a vast country, incapable of sustaining a dense population, in the absence of the two great necessities already named. Rivers abound, it is true;

but this region is nearly destitute of brooks and the smaller water-courses, which tend so much to comfort and fertility.

The origin and date of the great American Prairies form one of Nature's most majestic mysteries. The general character of the United States, of the Canadas, and of Mexico, is that of luxuriant fertility. It would be difficult to find another portion of the world, of the same extent, which has so little useless land as the inhabited parts of the American Union. Most of the mountains are arable; and even the prairies, in this section of the republic, are of deep alluvion. The same is true between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. Between the two lies the broad belt of comparative desert, which is the scene of this tale, appearing to interpose a barrier to the progress of the American people westward. Since the original publication of the book, however, the boundaries of the republic have been carried to the Pacific, and "the settler," preceded by the "trapper," has already established himself on the shores of that vast sea.

The Great Prairies appear to be the final gathering place of the red men. The remnants of the Mohicans and the Delawares, of the Creeks, Choctaws, and Cherokees, are destined to fulfill their time on these vast plains. The entire number of the Indians within the Union is differently computed at between one and five hundred thousand souls. Most of them inhabit the country west of the Mississippi. At the period of the tale they dwelt in open hostility, national feuds passing from generation to generation. The power of the republic has done much to restore peace to these wild scenes, and it is now possible to travel in security where civilized man did not dare to pass unprotected five-and-twenty years ago.

Recent events have brought the Grand Prairies into familiar notice, and we now read of journeys across them as, half a century since, we perused the narrative of the emigrants to Ohio and Louisiana. It is a singular commentary on the times that places for railroads, across these

vast plains are in active discussion, and that men have ceased to regard the project as chimerical.

This book closes the career of Leather-Stocking. Pressed upon by time, he had ceased to be the hunter and the warrior, and has become a trapper of the Great West. The sound of the axe has driven him from his beloved forests to seek refuge, by a species of desperate resignation, on the denuded plains that stretch to the Rocky Mountains. Here he passes the few closing years of his life, dying as he had lived, a philosopher of the wilderness, with few of the failings, none of the vices, and all the nature and truth of his position.

CHAPTER I.

"I pray thee, shepherd, if that love, or gold,
Can in this desert place buy entertainment,
Bring us where we may rest ourselves and feed."
—AS YOU LIKE IT.

MUCH was said and written at the time concerning the policy of adding the vast regions of Louisiana to the already immense and but half-tenanted territories of the United States. As the warmth of controversy, however, subsided, and party considerations gave place to more liberal views, the wisdom of the measure began to be generally conceded. It soon became apparent to the meaneast capacity that, while Nature had placed a barrier of desert to the extension of our population in the West, the measure had made us the masters of a belt of fertile country which, in the revolutions of the day, might have become the property of a rival nation. It gave us the sole command of the great thoroughfare of the interior, and placed the countless tribes of savages who lay along our borders entirely within our control; it reconciled conflicting rights and quieted national distrusts; it opened a thousand avenues to the inland trade and to the waters of the Pacific; and, if ever time or necessity shall require a peaceful division of this vast empire, it assures us of a neighbor that will possess our language, our religion, our institutions, and,

it is also to be hoped, our sense of political justice.

Although the purchase was made in 1803, the spring of the succeeding year was permitted to open before the official prudence of the Spaniard, who held the province for his European master, admitted the authority or even the entrance of its new proprietors. But the forms of the transfer were no sooner completed, and the new government acknowledged, than swarms of that restless people which is ever found hovering on the skirts of American society, plunged into the thickets that fringed the right bank of the Mississippi, with the same careless hardihood that had already sustained so many of them in their toilsome progress from the Atlantic States to the eastern shores of the "Father of Rivers."*

Time was necessary to blend the numerous and affluent colonists of the lower province with their new compatriots; but the thinner and more humble population above was almost immediately swallowed in the vortex which attended the tide of instant emigration. The inroad from the East was a new and sudden outbreking of a people who had endured a momentary restraint, after having been rendered nearly resistless by success. The toils and hazards of former undertakings were forgotten, as these endless and unexplored regions, with all their fancied as well as real advantages were laid open to their enterprise. The consequences were such as might easily have been anticipated from so tempting an offering, placed as it was before the eyes of a race long trained in adventure and nurtured in difficulties.

Thousands of the elders, of what were then called the *new States*,† broke up from the enjoyment of their hard-earned indul-

* The Mississippi is thus termed in several of the Indian languages. The reader will gain a more just idea of the importance of this stream if he recalls to mind the fact that the Missouri and the Mississippi are properly the same river. Their united lengths cannot be greatly short of four thousand miles.

† All the States admitted to the American Union since the Revolution are called new States, with the exception of Vermont; that had claims before the war, which were not, however, admitted until a later day.

gences, and were to be seen leading long files of descendants, born and reared in the forests of Ohio and Kentucky, deeper into the land in quest of that which might be termed, without the aid of poetry, their natural and more congenial atmosphere. The distinguished and resolute forester who first penetrated the wilds of the latter State, was of the number. This adventurous and venerable patriarch was now seen making his last remove; placing the endless river between him and the multitude his own success had drawn around him, and seeking for the renewal of enjoyments which were rendered worthless in his eyes when trammelled by the form of human institutions.*

In the pursuit of adventures such as these, men are ordinarily governed by their habits or deluded by their wishes. A few, led by the phantoms of hope and ambitious of sudden affluence, sought the mines of the virgin territory; but by far the greater portion of the emigrants were satisfied to establish themselves along the margins of the larger water-courses, content with the rich returns that the generous, alluvial bottoms of the rivers never fail to bestow on the most desultory industry. In this manner were communities formed with magical rapidity; and most of those who witnessed the purchase of the empty empire have lived to see already a populous and sovereign State parceled from its inhabitants, and received into the bosom of the national Union on terms of political equality.

The incidents and scenes which are connected with this legend occurred in the earliest periods of the enterprises which have led to so great and so speedy a result.

The harvest of the first year of our possession had long been passed, and the fading foliage of a few scattered trees was already beginning to exhibit the hues and tints of autumn, when a train of wagons issued from the bed of a dry riv-

* Colonel Boone, the patriarch of Kentucky. This venerable and hardy pioneer of civilization emigrated to an estate three hundred miles west of the Mississippi in his ninety-second year, because he found a population of ten to the square mile inconveniently crowded!

ulet, to pursue its course across the undulating surface of what, in the language of the country of which we write, is called a "rolling prairie." The vehicles, loaded with household goods and implements of husbandry, the few straggling sheep and cattle that were herded in the rear, and the rugged appearance and careless mien of the sturdy men who loitered at the sides of the lingering teams, united to announce a band of emigrants seeking for the El Dorado of the West. Contrary to the usual practice of the men of their caste, this party had left the fertile bottoms of the low country, and had found its way, by means only known to such adventurers, across glen and torrent, over deep morasses and arid wastes, to a point far beyond the usual limits of civilized habitations. In their front were stretched those broad plains which extend, with so little diversity of character, to the bases of the Rocky Mountains; and, many long and dreary miles in their rear, foamed the swift and turbid waters of La Platte.

The appearance of such a train in that bleak and solitary place was rendered the more remarkable by the fact that the surrounding country offered so little that was tempting to the cupidity of speculation, and, if possible, still less that was flattering to the hopes of an ordinary settler of new lands.

The meager herbage of the prairie promised nothing in favor of a hard and unyielding soil, over which the wheels of the vehicles rattled as lightly as if they traveled on a beaten road; neither wagons nor beasts making any deeper impression than to mark that bruised and withered grass which the cattle plucked from time to time, and as often rejected as food too sour for even hunger to render palatable.

Whatever might be the final destination of these adventurers, or the secret causes of their apparent security in so remote and unprotected a situation, there was no visible sign of uneasiness, uncertainty, or alarm among them. Including both sexes, and every age, the number of the party exceeded twenty.

At some little distance in front of the

whole marched the individual who, by his position and air, appeared to be the leader of the band. He was a tall, sun-burnt man, past the middle age, of a dull countenance and listless manner. His frame appeared loose and flexible; but it was vast, and in reality of prodigious power. It was only at moments, however, as some slight impediment opposed itself to his loitering progress, that his person, which in its ordinary gait seemed so lounging and nerveless, displayed any of those energies which lay latent in his system, like the slumbering and unwieldy, but terrible, strength of the elephant. The inferior lineaments of his countenance were coarse, extended, and vacant; while the superior, or those nobler parts which are thought to affect the intellectual being, were low, receding and mean.

The dress of this individual was a mixture of the coarsest vestments of a husbandman, with the leathern garments that fashion as well as use had in some degree rendered necessary to one engaged in his present pursuits. There was, however, a singular and wild display of prodigal and ill-judged ornaments blended with his motley attire. In place of the usual deerskin belt, he wore around his body a tarnished silken sash of the most gaudy colors; the buck-horn haft of his knife was profusely decorated with plates of silver; the marten's fur of his cap was of a fineness and shadowing that a queen might covet; the buttons of his rude and soiled blanket-coat were of the glittering coinage of Mexico; the stock of his rifle was of beautiful mahogany, riveted and banded with the same precious metal; and the trinkets of no less than three worthless watches dangled from different parts of his person. In addition to the pack and the rifle which were slung at his back, together with the well-filled and carefully guarded pouch and horn, he had carelessly cast a keen and bright wood-axe across his shoulder, sustaining the weight of the whole with as much apparent ease as if he moved unfettered in limb and free from encumbrance.

A short distance in the rear of this man came a group of youths very similarly at-

tired, and bearing sufficient resemblance to each other, and to their leader, to distinguish them as the children of one family. Though the youngest of their number could not much have passed the period that, in the nicer judgment of the law, is called the age of discretion, he had proved himself so far worthy of his progenitors as to have reared already his aspiring person to the standard height of his race. There were one or two others, of different mold, whose descriptions must, however, be referred to in the regular course of the narrative.

Of the females, there were but two who had arrived at womanhood; though several white-headed, olive-skinned faces were peering out of the foremost wagon of the train with eyes of lively curiosity and characteristic animation. The elder of the two adults was the sallow and wrinkled mother of most of the party; and the younger was a sprightly, active girl of eighteen, who, in figure, dress, and mien, seemed to belong to a station in society several gradations above that of any one of her visible associates. The second vehicle was covered with a top of a cloth so tightly drawn as to conceal its contents with the nicest care. The remaining wagons were loaded with such rude furniture and other personal effects as might be supposed to belong to one ready at any moment to change his abode, without reference to season or distance.

Perhaps there was little in this train, or in the appearance of its proprietors, that is not daily to be encountered on the highways of this changeable and moving country. But the solitary and peculiar scenery in which it was so unexpectedly exhibited gave to the party a marked character of wildness and adventure.

In the little valleys which, in the regular formation of the land, occurred at every mile of their progress, the view was bounded on two of the sides by the gradual and low elevations which give name to the description of prairie we have mentioned; while on the others the meager prospect ran off in long, narrow, barren perspectives, but slightly relieved by a pitiful show of coarse though somewhat luxuri-

ant vegetation. From the summits of the swells the eye became fatigued with the sameness and chilling dreariness of the landscape. The earth was not unlike the ocean, when its restless waters are heaving heavily, after the agitation and fury of the tempest have begun to lessen. There was the same waving and regular surface, the same absence of foreign objects, and the same boundless extent to the view. Indeed, so very striking was the resemblance between the water and the land that, however much the geologist might sneer at so simple a theory, it would have been difficult for a poet not to have felt that the formation of the one had been produced by the subsiding dominion of the other. Here and there a tall tree rose out of the bottoms, stretching its naked branches abroad, like some solitary vessel; and, to strengthen the delusion, far in the distance appeared two or three rounded thickets, looming in the misty horizon like islands resting on the waters. It is unnecessary to warn the practiced reader that the sameness of the surface, and the low stands of the spectators, exaggerated the distances; but, as swell appeared after swell, and island succeeded island, there was a disheartening assurance that long and seemingly interminable tracts of territory must be passed before the wishes of the humblest agriculturist could be realized.

Still the leader of the emigrants steadily pursued his way, with no other guide than the sun, turning his back resolutely on the abodes of civilization, and plunging at each step more deeply, if not irretrievably, into the haunts of the barbarous and savage occupants of the country. As the day drew nigher to a close, however, his mind, which was, perhaps, incapable of maturing any connected system of forethought, beyond that which related to the interests of the present moment, became in some slight degree troubled with the care of providing for the wants of the hours of darkness.

On reaching the crest of a swell that was a little higher than the usual elevations, he lingered a minute, and cast a half-curious eye on either hand, in quest

of those well-known signs which might indicate a place where the three grand requisites of water, fuel, and fodder, were to be obtained in conjunction.

It would seem that his search was fruitless; for after a few moments of indolent and listless examination, he suffered his huge frame to descend the gentle declivity, in the same sluggish manner that an overfatted beast would have yielded to the downward pressure.

His example was silently followed by those who succeeded him, though not until the young men had manifested much more of interest, if not of concern, in the brief inquiry which each in his turn made on gaining the same lookout. It was now evident, by the tardy movements both of beasts and men, that the time of necessary rest was not far distant. The matted grass of the lower land presented obstacles which fatigue began to render formidable, and the whip was becoming necessary to urge the lingering teams to their labor. At this moment, when, with the exception of the principal individual, a general lassitude was getting the mastery of the travelers, and every eye was cast, by a sort of common impulse, wistfully forward, the whole party was brought to a halt by a spectacle as sudden as it was unexpected.

The sun had fallen below the crest of the nearest wave of the prairie, leaving the usual rich and glowing train on its track. In the center of this flood of fiery light a human form appeared, drawn against the gilded background as distinctly, and seemingly as palpable, as though it would come within the grasp of any extended hand. The figure was colossal; the attitude musing and melancholy; and the situation directly in the route of the travelers. But embedded, as it was, in its setting of garish light, it was impossible to distinguish its just proportions or true character.

The effect of such a spectacle was instantaneous and powerful. The man in front of the emigrants came to a stand and remained gazing at the mysterious object with a dull interest that soon quickened into superstitious awe. His sons, so soon as the first emotions of sur-

prise had a little abated, drew slowly around him, and as they who governed the teams gradually followed their example, the whole party was soon condensed in one silent and wondering group. Notwithstanding the impression of a supernatural agency was very general among the travelers, the ticking of gunlocks was heard, and one or two of the bolder youths cast their rifles forward, in readiness for service.

"Send the boys off to the right," exclaimed the resolute wife and mother, in a sharp and dissonant voice; "I warrant me Asa or Abner will give some account of the creature!"

"It may be well enough to try the rifle," muttered a dull-looking man, whose features, both in outline and expression, bore no small resemblance to the first speaker, and who loosened the stock of his piece and brought it dexterously to the front, while delivering this opinion; "the Pawnee Loups are said to be hunting by hundreds in the plains; if so, they'll never miss a single man from their tribe."

"Stay!" exclaimed a soft-toned but alarmed female voice, which was easily to be traced to the trembling lips of the younger of the two women; "we are not all together; it may be a friend!"

"Who is scouting now?" demanded the father, scanning, at the same time, the cluster of his stout sons with a displeased and sullen eye. "Put by the piece, put by the piece," he continued, diverting the other's aim with the finger of a giant, and with the air of one it might be dangerous to deny. "My job is not yet ended; let us finish the little that remains in peace."

The man who had manifested so hostile an intention appeared to understand the other's allusion, and suffered himself to be diverted from his object. The sons turned their inquiring looks on the girl who had so eagerly spoken, to require an explanation; but, as if content with the respite she had obtained for the stranger, she sank back in her seat and chose to affect a maidenly silence.

In the meantime the hues of the heavens had often changed. In place of the bright-

ness that had dazzled the eye, a gray and more sober light had succeeded, and, as the setting lost its brilliancy, the proportions of the fanciful form became less exaggerated, and finally distinct. Ashamed to hesitate, now that the truth was no longer doubtful, the leader of the party resumed his journey, using the precaution, as he ascended the slight acclivity, to release his own rifle from the strap, and to cast it into a situation more convenient for sudden use.

There was little apparent necessity, however, for such watchfulness. From the moment when it had thus unaccountably appeared, as it were, between the heavens and the earth, the stranger's figure had neither moved nor given the smallest evidence of hostility. Had he harbored any such evil intention, the individual who now came plainly into view seemed but little qualified to execute them.

A frame that had endured the hardships of more than eighty seasons was not qualified to awaken apprehension in the breast of one as powerful as the emigrant. Notwithstanding his years, and his look of emaciation, if not of suffering, there was that about this solitary being, however, which said that Time, and not disease, had laid his hand heavily on him. His form had withered, but it was not wasted. The sinews and muscles, which had once denoted great strength, though shrunken, were still visible; and his whole figure had attained an appearance of induration which, if it were not for the well-known frailty of humanity, would have seemed to bid defiance to the further approaches of decay. His dress was chiefly of skins, worn with the hair to the weather; a pouch and horn were suspended from his shoulders; and he leaned on a rifle of uncommon length, but which, like its owner, exhibited the wear of long and hard service.

As the party drew nigher to this solitary being, and came within a distance to be heard, a low growl issued from the grass at his feet, and then a tall, gaunt, toothless hound arose lazily from his lair, and, shaking himself, made some show of

resisting the nearer approach of the travelers.

"Down, Hector, down," said his master, in a voice that was a little tremulous and hollow with age. "What have ye to do, pup, with men who journey on their lawful callings?"

"Stranger, if you are much acquainted in this country," said the leader of the emigrants, "can you tell a traveler where he may find necessities for the night?"

"Is the land filled on the other side of the Big River?" demanded the old man, solemnly, without appearing to hearken to the other's question; "or why do I see a sight I had never thought to behold again?"

"Why, there is country left, it is true, for such as have money, and are not particular in the choice," returned the emigrant; "but to my taste it is getting crowdy. What may a man call the distance from this place to the highest point on the main river?"

"A hunted deer could not cool his sides in the Mississippi without traveling a weary five hundred miles."

"And what may you name the district hereaway?"

"By what name," returned the old man, pointing significantly upward, "would you call the spot where you see yonder cloud?"

The emigrant looked at the other like one who did not comprehend his meaning, and who half suspected he was trifled with; but he contented himself by saying—

"You are but a new inhabitant like myself, I reckon, stranger, or otherwise you would not be backward in helping a traveler to some advice; words cost but little, and sometimes lead to friendships."

"Advice is not a gift, but a debt that the old owe to the young. What would you wish to know?"

"Where I may camp for the night. I'm no great difficulty-maker as to bed and board; but all old journeyers like myself know the virtue of sweet water and a good browse for the cattle."

"Come, then, with me, and you shall be master of both; and little more is

it that I can offer on this hungry prairie."

As the old man was speaking, he raised his heavy rifle to his shoulder with a facility a little remarkable for his years and appearance, and without further words led the way over the acclivity to the adjacent bottom.

CHAPTER II.

"Up with my tent: here will I lie to-night,
But where to-morrow?—Well, all's one for that."

—RICHARD III.

THE travelers soon discovered the usual and unerring evidence that the several articles necessary to their situation were not far distant. A clear and gurgling spring burst out of the side of the declivity and, joining its waters to those of other similar little fountains in its vicinity, their united contributions formed a run which was easily to be traced for miles along the prairie by the scattering foliage and verdure which occasionally grew within the influence of its moisture. Hither, then, the stranger held his way, eagerly followed by the willing teams, whose instinct gave them a prescience of refreshment and rest.

On reaching what he deemed a suitable spot the old man halted and, with an inquiring look, he seemed to demand if it possessed the needed conveniences. The leader of the emigrants cast his eye understandingly about him, and examined the place with the keenness of one competent to judge of so nice a question, though in that dilatory and heavy manner which rarely permitted him to betray precipitation.

"Ay, this may do," he said, when satisfied with his scrutiny. "Boys, you have seen the last of the sun; be stirring."

The young men manifested a characteristic obedience. The order, for such in tone and manner it was, in truth, was received with respect; but the utmost movement was the falling of an ax or two from the shoulder to the ground, while their owners continued to regard the place with

listless and incurious eyes. In the meantime the elder traveler, as if familiar with the nature of the impulses by which his children were governed, disencumbered himself of his pack and rifle, and, assisted by the man already mentioned as disposed to appeal so promptly to the rifle, he quietly proceeded to release the cattle from the gears.

At length the eldest of the sons stepped heavily forward, and, without any apparent effort, he buried his ax to the eye in the soft body of a cotton-wood tree. He stood a moment regarding the effect of the blow, with that sort of contempt with which a giant might be supposed to contemplate the puny resistance of a dwarf, and then, flourishing the implement above his head, with the grace and dexterity with which a master of the art of offense would wield his nobler though less useful weapon, he quickly severed the trunk of the tree, bringing its tall top crashing to the earth in submission to his prowess. His companions regarded the operation with indolent curiosity, until they saw the prostrate trunk stretched on the ground, when, as if a signal for a general attack had been given, they advanced in a body to the work; and in a space of time, and with a neatness of execution, that would have astonished an ignorant spectator, they stripped a small but suitable spot of its burden of forest, as effectually and almost as promptly as if a whirlwind had had passed along the place.

The stranger had been a silent but attentive observer of their progress. As tree after tree came whistling down, he cast his eyes upward at the vacancies they left in the heavens, with a melancholy gaze, and finally turned away, muttering to himself with a bitter smile, like one who disdained giving a more audible utterance to his discontent. Pressing through the group of active and busy children who had already lighted a cheerful fire, the attention of the old man became next fixed on the movements of the leader of the emigrants and of his savage-looking assistant.

These two had already liberated the cattle, which were eagerly browsing the

grateful and nutritious extremities of the fallen trees, and were now employed about the wagon, which has been described as having its contents concealed with so much apparent care. Notwithstanding this particular conveyance appeared to be as silent and as tenantless as the rest of the vehicles, the men applied their strength to its wheels and rolled it, apart from the others, to a dry and elevated spot near the edge of the thicket. Here they brought certain poles, which had seemingly been long employed in such a service, and fastening their larger ends firmly in the ground, the smaller were attached to the hoops that supported the covering of the wagon. Large folds of cloth were next drawn out of the vehicle, and, after being spread around the whole, were pegged to the earth in such a manner as to form a tolerably capacious and an exceedingly convenient tent. After surveying their work with inquisitive and perhaps jealous eyes, arranging a fold here, and driving a peg more firmly there, the men once more applied their strength to the wagon, pulling it by its projecting tongue from the center of the canopy until it appeared in the open air, deprived of its covering, and destitute of any other freight than a few light articles of furniture. The latter were immediately removed by the traveler into the tent with his own hands, as though to enter it were a privilege to which even his bosom companion was not entitled.

Curiosity is a passion that is rather quickened than destroyed by seclusion, and the old inhabitant of the prairies did not view these precautionary and mysterious movements without experiencing some of its impulses. He approached the tent, and was about to sever two of its folds, with the very obvious intention of examining more closely into the nature of its contents, when the man who had once already placed his life in jeopardy seized him by the arm, and with a rude exercise of his strength threw him from the spot he had selected as the one most convenient for his object.

"It's an honest regulation, friend," the fellow dryly observed, though with an eye that threatened volumes, "and some-

times it is a safe one, which says, 'Mind your own business.'"

"Men seldom bring anything to be concealed into these deserts," returned the old man, as if willing and yet a little ignorant how to apologize for the liberty he had been about to take, "and I had hoped no offense in examining your comforts."

"They seldom bring themselves, I reckon. Though this has the look of an old county, to my eye it seems not to be overly peopled."

"The land is as aged as the rest of the works of the Lord, I believe; but you say true concerning its inhabitants. Many months have passed since I have laid eyes on a face of my own color before your own. I say again, friend, I meant no harm; I did not know but there was something behind the cloth that might bring former days to my mind."

As the stranger ended his simple explanation he walked meekly away, like one who felt the deepest sense of the right which every man has to the quiet enjoyment of his own, without any troublesome interference on the part of his neighbor; a wholesome and a just principle that he had also most probably imbibed from the habits of his secluded life. As he passed toward the little encampment of the emigrants, for such the place had now become, he heard the voice of the leader calling aloud in its hoarse tones, the name of—

"Ellen Wade!"

The girl who has already been introduced to the reader, and who was occupied with the others of her sex around the fires, sprang willingly forward at this summons; and, passing the stranger with the activity of a young antelope, she was instantly lost behind the forbidden folds of the tent. Neither her sudden disappearance, nor any of the arrangements we have mentioned, seemed, however, to excite the smallest surprise among the remainder of the party. The young men, who had already completed their tasks with the ax, were all engaged, after their lounging and listless manner, some in bestowing equitable portions of the fodder

among the different animals; others in plying the heavy pestle of a movable hominy-mortar;* and one or two in wheeling the remainder of the wagons aside, and arranging them in such a manner as to form a sort of outwork for their otherwise defenseless bivouac.

These several duties were soon performed, and, as darkness now began to conceal the objects on the surrounding prairie, the shrill-toned termagant, whose voice since the halt had been diligently exercised among her idle and drowsy offspring, announced in tones that might have been heard at a dangerous distance that the evening meal waited only for the approach of those who were to consume it. Whatever may be the other qualities of a border-man, he is seldom deficient in the virtue of hospitality. The emigrant no sooner heard the sharp call of his wife than he cast his eyes about him in quest of the stranger, in order to offer him the place of distinction in the rude entertainment to which they were so unceremoniously summoned.

"I thank you, friend," the old man replied to the rough invitation to take a seat nigh the smoking kettle; "you have my hearty thanks; but I have eaten for the day, and am not one of them who dig their graves with their teeth. Well, as you wish it, I will take a place, for it is long sin' I have seen people of my color eating their daily bread."

"You ar' an old settler in these districts, then?" the emigrant rather remarked than inquired, with his mouth filled nearly to overflowing with the delicious hominy prepared by his skillful though repulsive spouse. "They told us below we should find settlers something thinnish hereaway, and I must say the report was mainly true; for, unless we count the Canada traders on the big river, you ar' the first white face I have met in a good five hundred miles; that is, calculating according to your own reckoning."

"Though I have spent some years in this quarter, I can hardly be called a set-

tler, seeing that I have no regular abode, and seldom pass more than a month at a time on the same range."

"A hunter, I reckon?" the other continued, glancing his eyes aside, as if to examine the equipments of his new acquaintance; "your fixen seem none of the best for such a calling."

"They are old and nearly ready to be laid aside, like their master," said the old man, regarding his rifle with a look in which affection and regret were singularly blended; "and I may say they are but little needed, too. You are mistaken, friend, in calling me a hunter; I am nothing better than a trapper."*

"If you ar' much of the one, I'm bold to say you ar' something of the other; for the two callings go mainly together in these districts."

"To the shame of the man who is able to follow the first be it said!" returned the trapper, whom in future we shall choose to designate by his pursuit; "for more than fifty years did I carry my rifle in the wilderness without so much as setting a snare for even a bird that flies the heavens; much less a beast that has nothing but legs for its gifts."

"I see but little difference whether a man gets his peltry by the rifle or by the trap," said the ill-looking companion of the emigrant, in his rough manner. "The 'arth was made for our comfort; and, for that matter, so ar' its creatur's."

"You seem to have but little plunder, † stranger, for one who is far abroad," bluntly interrupted the emigrant, as if he had a reason for wishing to change the conversation. "I hope you ar' better off for skins."

"I make but little use of either," the

* It is scarcely necessary to say that this American word means one who takes his game in a trap. It is of general use on the frontiers. The beaver, an animal too sagacious to be easily killed, is oftener taken in this way than in any other.

† The cant word for luggage in the Western States of America is "plunder." The term might easily mislead one as to the character of the people, who, notwithstanding their pleasant use of so expressive a word, are, like the inhabitants of all new settlements, hospitable and honest. Knavery of the description conveyed by "plunder" is chiefly found in regions more civilized.

* Hoiny is a dish composed chiefly of cracked corn, or maize.

trapper quietly replied. "At my time of life, food and clothing be all that is needed; and I have little occasion for what you call plunder, unless it may be now and then to barter for a horn of powder or a bar of lead."

"You ar' not, then, of these parts by natur', friend," the emigrant continued, having in his mind the exception which the other had taken to the very equivocal word, which he himself, according to the custom of the country, had used for "baggage," or "effects."

"I was born on the sea-shore, though most of my life has been passed in the woods."

The whole party now looked up at him, as men are apt to turn their eyes on some unexpected object of general interest.

One or two of the young men repeated the words "sea-shore;" and the woman tendered him one of those civilities with which, uncouth as they were, she was little accustomed to grace her hospitality, as if in deference to the traveled dignity of her guest. After a long and seemingly a meditating silence, the emigrant, who had, however, seen no apparent necessity to suspend the functions of his masticating powers, again resumed the discourse.

"It is a long road, as I have heard, from the waters of the West to the shores of the main sea."

"It is a weary path, indeed, friend; and much have I seen, and something have I suffered, in journeying over it."

"A man would see a good deal of hard travel in going its length."

"Seventy-and-five years have I been upon the road; and there are not half that number of leagues in the whole distance, after you leave the Hudson, on which I have not tasted venison of my own killing. But this is vain boasting. Of what use are former deeds, when time draws to an end?"

"I once met a man that had boasted on the river he names," observed the eldest son, speaking in a low tone of voice, like one who distrusted his knowledge, and deemed it prudent to assume a becoming diffidence in the presence of a man who had seen so much; "from his tell, it

must be a considerable stream, and deep enough for a keel-boat from top to bottom."

"It is a wide and deep water-course, and many sightly towns are there growing on its banks," returned the trapper; "and yet it is but a brook to the waters of the endless river!"

"I call nothing a stream that a man can travel round," exclaimed the ill-looking associate of the emigrant; "a real river must be crossed, not headed, like a bear in a country hunt."*

"Have you been far toward the sun-down, friend?" interrupted the emigrant, as if he desired to keep his rough companion as much as possible out of the discourse. "I find it is a wide tract of clearing this, into which I have fallen."

"You may travel weeks and you will see it the same. I often think the Lord has placed this barren belt of prairie behind the States, to warn men to what their folly may yet bring the land! Aye, weeks, if not months, may you journey in these open fields, in which there is neither dwelling nor habitation for man or beast. Even the savage animals travel miles on miles to seek their dens; and yet the wind seldom blows from the east, but I conceit the sound of axes and the crash of falling trees are in my ears."

As the old man spoke with the seriousness and dignity that age seldom fails to communicate, even to less striking sentiments, his auditors were deeply attentive and as silent as the grave. Indeed, the trapper was left to renew the dialogue himself, which he soon did by asking a question in the indirect manner so much in use by the border inhabitants.

"You found it no easy matter to ford the water-courses, and to make your way so deep into the prairies, friend, with teams of horses and herds of horned beasts?"

"I kept the left bank of the main river," the emigrant replied, "until I found the

* There is a practice in the new countries to assemble the men of a large district, sometimes of an entire county, to exterminate the beasts of prey. They form themselves into a circle of several miles in extent, and gradually draw nearer, killing all before them. The allusion is to this custom, in which the hunted beast is turned from one to another.

stream leading too much to the north, when we rafted ourselves across without any great suffering. The woman lost a fleece or two from the next year's shearing, and the girls had one cow less to their dairy. Since then we have done bravely by bridging a creek every day or two."

"It is likely you will continue west until you come to land more suitable for a settlement?"

"Until I see reason to stop, or to turn ag'in," the emigrant bluntly answered, rising at the same time, and cutting short the dialogue by the suddenness of the movement. His example was followed by the trapper, as well as the rest of the party; and then, without much deference to the presence of their guests, the travelers proceeded to make their dispositions to pass the night. Several little bowers, or rather huts, had already been formed of the tops of trees, blankets of coarse country manufacture, and the skins of buffaloes, united without much reference to any other object than temporary comfort. Into these covers the children, with their mother, soon drew themselves, where, it is more than possible, they were all speedily lost in the oblivion of sleep. Before the men, however, could seek their rest, they had sundry little duties to perform; such as completing their works of defense, carefully concealing the fires, replenishing the fodder of their cattle, and setting the watch that was to protect the party in the approaching hours of night.

The former was effected by dragging the trunks of a few trees into the intervals left by the wagons, and along the open space between the vehicles and the thicket, on which, in military language, the encampment would be said to have rested: thus forming a sort of *chevaux de frise* on three sides of the position. Within these narrow limits (with the exception of what the tent contained), both man and beast were now collected; the latter being far too happy in resting their weary limbs to give any undue annoyance to their scarcely more intelligent associates. Two of the young men took their rifles; and, first renewing their priming, and examining

the flints with the utmost care, they proceeded, the one to the extreme right, and the other to the left of the encampment, where they posted themselves within the shadows of the thicket, but in such positions as enabled each to overlook a portion of the prairie.

The trapper loitered about the place, declining to share the straw of the emigrant, until the whole arrangement was completed; and then, without the ceremony of an adieu, he slowly retired from the spot.

It was now in the first watch of the night, and the pale, quivering, and deceptive light from a new moon was playing over the endless waves of the prairie, tipping the swells with gleams of brightness, and leaving the interval land in deep shadow. Accustomed to scenes of solitude like the present, the old man, as he left the encampment, proceeded alone into the waste, like a bold vessel leaving its haven to enter on the trackless field of the ocean. He appeared to move for some time without object, or, indeed, without any apparent consciousness whither his limbs were carrying him. At length, on reaching the rise of one of the undulations he came to a stand, and, for the first time since leaving the band who had caused such a flood of reflections and recollections to crowd upon his mind, the old man became aware of his present situation. Throwing one end of his rifle to the earth, he stood leaning on the other, again lost in deep contemplation for several minutes, during which time his hound came and crouched at his feet. A deep, menacing growl from the faithful animal aroused him from his musing.

"What now, dog?" hê said, looking down at his companion, as if he addressed a being of an intelligence equal to his own, and speaking in a voice of great affection.

"What is up, pup? ha! Hector; what is it nosing now? It won't do, dog; it won't do; the very fa'ans play in open view of us, without minding so worn-out curs as you and I. Instinct in this gift, Hector, and they have found out how little we are to be feared, they have."

The dog stretched his head upward and

responded to the words of his master by a long and plaintive whine, which he even continued after he had again buried his head in the grass, as if he held an intelligent communication with one who so well knew how to interpret dumb discourse.

"This is a manifest warning, Hector!" the trapper continued, dropping his voice to the tones of caution and looking warily about him. "What is it, pup? speak plainer, dog; what is it?"

The hound had, however, already laid his nose to the earth, and was silent, appearing to slumber. But the keen, quick glances of his master soon caught a glimpse of a distant figure, which seemed, through the deceptive light, floating along the very elevation on which he had placed himself. Presently its proportions became more distinct, and then an airy female form appeared to hesitate, as if considering whether it would be prudent to advance. Though the eyes of the dog were now to be seen glancing in the rays of the moon, opening and shutting lazily, he gave no further signs of displeasure.

"Come nigher; we are friends," said the trapper, associating himself with his companion by long use, and probably through the strength of the secret tie that connected them together; "we are your friends; none will harm you."

Encouraged by the mild tones of his voice, and perhaps led on by the earnestness of her purpose, the female approached until she stood at his side; when the old man perceived his visitor to be the young woman with whom the reader has already become acquainted by the name of "Ellen Wade."

"I had thought you were gone," she said, looking timidly and anxiously around. "They said you were gone, and that we should never see you again. I did not think it was you!"

"Men are no common objects in these empty fields," returned the trapper, "and I humbly hope, though I have so long consorted with the beasts of the wilderness, that I have not yet lost the look of my kind."

"Oh, I knew you to be a man, and I

thought I knew the whine of the hound, too," she answered, hastily, as if willing to explain she knew not what, and then checking herself, like one fearful of having already said too much.

"I saw no dogs among the teams of your father," the trapper remarked.

"Father!" exclaimed the girl, feelingly, "I have no father! I had nearly said no friend."

The old man turned toward her with a look of kindness and interest that was even more conciliating than the ordinary upright and benevolent expression of his weather-beaten countenance.

"Why then do you venture in a place where none but the strong should come?" he demanded. "Did you not know that when you crossed the big river you left a friend behind you that is always bound to look to the young and feeble like yourself?"

"Of whom do you speak?"

"The law—'tis bad to have it, but I sometimes think it is worse to be entirely without it. Age and weakness has brought me to feel such weakness at times. Yes—yes, the law is needed when such as have not the gifts of strength and wisdom are to be taken care of. I hope, young woman, if you have no father, you have at least a brother."

The maiden felt the tacit reproach conveyed in this covert question, and for a moment she remained in an embarrassed silence. But, catching a glimpse of the mild and serious features of her companion as he continued to gaze on her with a look of interest, she replied firmly and in a manner that left no doubt she comprehended his meaning.

"Heaven forbid that any such as you have seen should be a brother of mine, or anything else near or dear to me! But, tell me, do you then actually live alone in this desert district, old man; is there really none here besides yourself?"

"There are hundreds, nay, thousands of the rightful owners of the country, roving about the plains; but few of our own color."

"And have you then met none who are white but us?" interrupted the girl, like

one too impatient to await the tardy explanations of age and deliberation.

"Not in many days. Hush, Hector, hush!" he added, in reply to a low and nearly inaudible growl from his hound. "The dog scents mischief in the wind. The black bears from the mountains sometimes make their way even lower than this. The pup is not apt to complain of the harmless game. I am not so ready and true with the piece as I used-to-could-be, yet I have struck even the fiercest animals of the prairie in my time; so you have little to fear, young woman."

The girl raised her eyes in that peculiar manner which is so often practiced by her sex when they commence their glances, by examining the earth at their feet, and terminate them by noting everything within the power of human vision; but she rather manifested the quality of impatience than any feeling of alarm.

A short bark from the dog, however, soon gave a new direction to the looks of both, and then the real object of his second warning became dimly visible.

CHAPTER III.

"Come, come, thou art as hot a Jack in thy mood as any in Italy; and as soon moved to be moody, and as soon moody to be moved."—ROMEO AND JULIET.

THOUGH the trapper manifested some surprise when he perceived that another human figure was approaching him, and that, too, from a direction opposite to the place where the emigrant had made his encampment, it was with the steadiness of one long accustomed to scenes of danger.

"This is a man," he said; "and one who has white blood in his veins, or his step would be lighter. It will be well to be ready for the worst, as the half-and-halves* that one meets in these distant districts, are altogether more barbarous than the real savage."

He raised his rifle while he spoke, and assured himself of the state of its flint, as well as of the priming, by manual examination. But his arm was arrested, while in the act of throwing forward the muzzle of the piece, by the eager and trembling hands of his companion.

"For God's sake be not too hasty," she said; "it may be a friend—an acquaintance—a neighbor!"

"A friend!" the old man repeated, deliberately releasing himself at the same time from her grasp. "Friends are rare in any land, and less in this, perhaps, than in any other; and the neighborhood is too thinly settled to make it likely that he who comes toward us is even an acquaintance."

"But, though a stranger, you would not seek his blood!"

The trapper earnestly regarded her anxious and frightened features, and then he dropped the butt of his rifle on the ground, like one whose purpose had undergone a sudden change.

"No," he said, speaking rather to himself than to his companion, "she is right; blood is not to be spilt to save the life of one so useless, and so near his time. Let him come on; my skins, my traps, and even my rifle shall be his if he sees fit to demand them."

"He will ask for neither; he wants neither," returned the girl; "if he be an honest man he will surely be content with his own, and ask for nothing that is the property of another."

The trapper had not time to express the surprise he felt at this incoherent and contradictory language, for the man who was advancing was already within fifty feet of the place where they stood. In the meantime Hector had not been an indifferent witness of what was passing. At the sound of the distant footsteps he had risen from his warm bed at the feet of his master; and now, as the stranger appeared in open view he stalked slowly toward him, crouching to the earth like a panther about to take his leap.

"Call in your dog," said a firm, deep, manly voice, in tones of friendship rather than of menace; "I love a hound, and

* Half-breeds: men born of Indian women by white fathers. The race has much of the depravity of civilization, without the virtues of the savage

should be sorry to do an injury to the animal."

"You hear what is said about you, pup," the trapper answered; "come hither, fool. His growl and his bark are all that is left of him now; you may come on, friend; the hound is toothless."

The stranger profited by the intelligence. He sprang eagerly forward, and at the next instant stood at the side of Ellen Wade. After assuring himself of the identity of the latter by a hasty but keen glance, he turned his attention, with a quickness and impatience that proved the interest he took in the result, to a similar examination of her companion.

"From what cloud have you fallen, my good old man?" he said, in a careless, off-hand, heedless manner, that seemed too natural to be assumed; "or do you actually live, hereaway, in the prairies!"

"I have been long on earth, and never I hope nigher to heaven than I am at this moment," returned the trapper; "my dwelling, if dwelling I may be said to have, is not far distant. Now, may I take the liberty with you, that you are so willing to take with others? Whence do you come, and where is your home?"

"Softly, softly; when I have done with my catechism, it will be time to begin with yours. What sport is this you follow by moonlight? You are not dodging the buffaloes at such an hour!"

"I am, as you see, going from an encampment of travelers, which lies over yonder swell in the land, to my own wigwam; in doing so I wrong no man."

"All fair and true. And you got this young woman to show you the way, because she knows it so well, and you know so little about it yourself!"

"I met her, as I have met you, by accident. For ten tiresome years have I dwelt on these open fields, and never, before to-night, have I found human beings with white skins on them, at this hour. If my presence here gives offense, I am sorry, and will go my way. It is more than likely that, when your young friend has told her story, you will be better given to believe mine."

"Friend!" said the youth, lifting a cap

of skins from his head, and running his fingers leisurely through a dense mass of black and shaggy locks; "if I have ever laid eyes on the girl before to-night, may I——"

"You've said enough, Paul," interrupted the female, laying her hand on his mouth, with a familiarity that gave something very like the lie direct to his intended asseveration. "Our secret will be safe with this honest old man. I know it by his looks and kind words."

"Our secret, Ellen, have you forgot?"

"Nothing. I have not forgotten anything I should remember. But still I say we are safe with this honest trapper."

"Trapper! is he then a trapper? Give me your hand, father; our trades should bring us acquainted."

"There is little call for handicraft in this region," returned the other, examining the athletic and active form of the youth, as he leaned carelessly and not ungracefully on his rifle; "the art of taking the creature's of God in traps and nets is one that needs more cunning than manhood; and yet am I brought to practice it in my age! But it would be quite as seemly in one like you to follow a pursuit better becoming your years and courage."

"I! I never took even a slinking mink or a paddling muskrat in a cage; though I admit having peppered a few of the dark-skin'd devils, when I had much better have kept my powder in the horn and the lead in its pouch. Not I, old man; nothing that crawls the earth is for my sport."

"What, then, may you do for a living, friend?—for little profit is to be made in these districts, if a man denies himself his lawful right in the beasts of the fields."

"I deny myself nothing. If a bear crosses my path he is soon the mere ghost of Bruin. The deer begin to nose me; and as for the buffalo, I have killed more beef, old stranger, than the largest butcher in all Kentuck."

"You can shoot, then?" demanded the trapper, with a glow of latent fire glimmering about his eyes; "is your hand true and your look quick?"

"The first is like a steel trap, and the last nimbler than a buckshot. I wish it was hot noon now, grand'ther; and that there was an acre or two of your white swans or of black-feathered ducks going south, over our heads; you or Ellen here might set your heart on the finest in the flock, and my character against a horn of powder, that the bird would be hanging head downward in five minutes, and that too with a single ball. I scorn a shot-gun! No man can say he ever knew me to carry one a rod."

"The lad has good in him! I see it plainly by his manner," said the trapper, turning to Ellen with an encouraging air. "I will take it on myself to say that you are not unwise in meeting him as you do. Tell me, lad; did you ever strike a leaping buck atwixt the antlers? Hector; quiet, pup; quiet! The very name of venison quickens the blood of the cur. Did you ever take an animal in that fashion on the long leap?"

"You might just as well ask me, 'Did you ever eat?' There is no fashion, old stranger, that a deer has not been touched by my hand, unless it was when asleep."

"Ay, ay; you have a long and a happy—ay, and an honest life afore you! I am old, and, I suppose I might also say, worn out and useless; but if it was given me to choose my time and place again—as such things are not and ought not ever to be given to the will of man—though if such a gift was to be given me, I would say, twenty and the wilderness. But tell me; how do you part with the peltry?"

"With my pelts! I never took a skin from a buck nor a quill from a goose in my life! I knock them over now and then for a meal, and sometimes to keep my finger true to the touch; but when hunger is satisfied the prairie wolves get the remainder. No—no—I keep to my calling; which pays me better than all the fur I could sell on the other side of the big river."

The old man appeared to ponder a little; but shaking his head, he soon continued:

"I know of but one business that can be followed here with profit——"

He was interrupted by the youth, who raised a small cup of tin which dangled at his neck before the other's eyes, and, springing its lid, the delicious odor of the finest flavored honey diffused itself over the organs of the trapper.

"A bee-hunter!" observed the latter, with a readiness that proved he understood the nature of the occupation, though not without some little surprise at discovering one of the other's spirited mien engaged in so humble a pursuit. "It pays well in the skirts of the settlements, but I should call it a doubtful trade in more open districts."

"You think a tree is wanting for a swarm to settle in! But I know differently; and so I have stretched out a few hundred miles farther west than common to taste your honey. And now I have baited your curiosity, stranger, you will just move aside while I tell the remainder of my story to this young woman."

"It is not necessary, I'm sure it is not necessary that he should leave us," said Ellen, with a haste that implied some little consciousness of the singularity, if not of the impropriety, of the request. "You can have nothing to say that the whole world might not hear."

"No! well, may I be stung to death by drones if I understand the buzzings of a woman's mind! For my part, Ellen, I care for nothing nor anybody; and am just as ready to go down to the place where your uncle, if uncle you can call one who I'll swear is no relation, has hopped his teams, and tell the old man my mind now, as I shall be a year hence. You have only to say a single word, and the thing is done; let him like it or not."

"You are ever so hasty and rash, Paul Hover, that I seldom know when I am safe with you. How can you, who know the danger of our being seen together, speak of going before my uncle and his sons?"

"Has he done that of which he has reason to be ashamed?" demanded the trapper, who had not moved an inch from the place he first occupied.

"Heaven forbid! But there are reasons why he should not be seen just now,

that could do him no harm if known, but which may not yet be told. And so if you will wait, father, near yonder willow-bush, until I have heard what Paul can possibly have to say, I shall be sure to come and wish you good-night before I return to the camp."

The trapper drew slowly aside, as if satisfied with the somewhat incoherent reason Ellen had given why he should retire. When completely out of ear-shot of the earnest and hurried dialogue that instantly commenced between the two he had left, the old man again paused, and patiently awaited the moment when he might renew his conversation with beings in whom he felt a growing interest, no less from the mysterious character of their intercourse than from a natural sympathy in the welfare of a pair so young, and who, as in the simplicity of his heart he was also fain to believe, were also so deserving. He was accompanied by his indolent but attached dog, who once more made his bed at the feet of his master, and soon lay slumbering as usual, with his head nearly buried in the dense fog of the prairie-grass.

It was a spectacle so unusual to see the human form amid the solitude in which he dwelt that the trapper bent his eyes on the dim figures of his new acquaintances with sensations to which he had long been a stranger. Their presence awakened recollections and emotions to which his sturdy but honest nature had latterly paid but little homage, and his thoughts began to wander over the varied scenes of a life of hardships that had been strangely blended with scenes of wild and peculiar enjoyment. The train taken by his thoughts had already conducted him in imagination far into an ideal world, when he was once more suddenly recalled to the reality of his situation by the movements of the faithful hound.

The dog who, in submission to his years and infirmities, had manifested such a decided propensity to sleep, now arose and stalked from out the shadow cast by the tall person of his master, and looked abroad into the prairie, as if his instinct apprised him of the presence of still

another visitor. Then seemingly content with his examination, he returned to his comfortable post, and disposed of his weary limbs with the deliberation and care of one who was no novice in the art of self-preservation.

"What! again, Hector?" said the trapper, in a soothing voice, which he had the caution, however, to utter in an undertone; "what is it, dog? tell it all to his master, pup; what is it?"

Hector answered with another growl, but was content to continue in his lair. These were evidences of intelligence and distrust to which one as practiced as the trapper could not turn an inattentive ear. He again spoke to the dog, encouraging him to watchfulness by a low, guarded whistle. The animal, however, as if conscious of having already discharged his duty, obstinately refused to raise his head from the grass.

"A hint from such a friend is far better than man's advice!" muttered the trapper, as he slowly moved toward the couple who were yet too earnestly and abstractedly engaged in their own discourse to notice his approach; "and none but a conceited settler would hear it and not respect it as he ought.—Children," he added, when nigh enough to address his companions; "we are not alone in these dreary fields; there are others stirring, and, therefore, to the shame of our kind be it said, danger is nigh."

"If one of the lazy sons of Skirting Ishmael is prowling out of his camp to-night," said the young bee-hunter, with great vivacity, and in tones that might easily have been excited to a menace, "he may have an end put to his journey sooner than either he or his father is dreaming!"

"My life on it they are all with the teams," hurriedly answered the girl. "I saw the whole of them asleep myself, except the two on watch; and their natures have greatly changed if they too are not dreaming of a turkey-hunt or a court-house fight at this very moment."

"Some beast with a strong scent has passed between the wind and the hound, father, and it makes him uneasy; or perhaps he too is dreaming. I had a pup of

my own in Kentuck, that would start upon a long chase from a deep sleep, and all upon the fancy of some dream. Go to him and pinch his ear, that the beast may feel the life within him."

"Not so—not so," returned the trapper, shaking his head as one who better understood the qualities of his dog. "Youth sleeps, ay, and dreams too; but age is awake and watchful. The pup is never false with his nose, and long experience tells me to heed his warnings."

"Did you ever run him upon the trail of carrion?"

"Why, I must say that the ravenous beasts have sometimes tempted me to let him loose, for they are as greedy as men after the venison, in its season; but then I know the reason of the dog would tell him the object! No—no, Hector is an animal known in the ways of man, and will never strike a false trail when a true one is to be followed!"

"Ay, ay, the secret is out! You have run the hound on the track of a wolf, and his nose has a better memory than his master!" said the bee-hunter, laughing.

"I have seen the creatur' sleep for hours with pack after pack in open view. A wolf might eat out of his tray without a snarl, unless there was a scarcity; then, indeed, Hector would be apt to claim his own."

"There are panthers down from the mountains; I saw one make a leap at a sick deer, as the sun was setting. Go—go you back to the dog, and tell him the truth—father; in a minute, I——"

He was interrupted by a long, loud and piteous howl from the hound, which rose on the air of the evening like the wailing of some spirit in the place, and passed off into the prairie in cadences that rose and fell like its own undulating surface. The trapper was impressively silent, listening intently. Even the reckless bee-hunter was struck with the wailing wildness of the sounds. After a short pause the former whistled the dog to his side, and, turning to his companions, he said, with the seriousness which in his opinion the occasion demanded—

"They who think man enjoys all the

knowledge of the creatur's of God will live to be disappointed, if they reach, as I have done, the age of fourscore years. I will not take upon myself to say what mischief is brewing, nor will I vouch that even the hound himself knows so much; but that evil is nigh, and that wisdom invites us to avoid it, I have heard from the mouth of one who never lies. I did think the pup had become unused to the footsteps of man; and that your presence made him uneasy; but his nose has been on a long scent the whole evening, and what I mistook as a notice of your coming has been intended for something more serious. If the advice of an old man is, then, worth hearkening to, children, you will quickly go different ways to your places of shelter and safety."

"If I quit Ellen at such a moment," exclaimed the youth, "may I——"

"You've said enough!" the girl interrupted by again interposing a hand that might, both by its delicacy and color, have graced a far more elevated station in life; "my time is out, and we must part at all events—so good-night, Paul—father—good-night."

"Hist!" said the youth, seizing her arm, as she was in the very act of tripping from his side. "Hist! Do you hear nothing? There are buffaloes playing their pranks at no great distance. That sound beats the earth like a herd of the mad, scampering devils!"

His two companions listened, as people in their situation would be apt to lend their faculties to discover the meaning of any doubtful noises, especially when heard after so many and such startling warnings. The unusual sounds were unequivocally, though still faintly audible. The youth and his female companion had made several hurried and vacillating conjectures concerning their nature, when a current of the night air brought the rush of trampling footsteps too sensible to their ears to render mistake any longer possible.

"I am right!" said the bee-hunter; "a panther is driving a herd before him; or, may be, there is a battle among the beasts."

"Your ears are cheats," returned the old man, who, from the moment his own organs had been able to catch the distant sounds, stood like a statue made to represent deep attention; "the leaps are too long for the buffalo and too regular for terror. Hist! now they are in a bottom where the grass is high, and the sound is deadened! Aye, there they go on the hard earth, and now they come up the swell, dead upon us; they will be here afore you can find cover!"

"Come, Ellen," cried the youth, seizing his companion by the hand, "let us make a trail for the encampment."

"Too late! too late!" exclaimed the trapper, "for the creatur's are in open view; and a bloody band of accursed Sioux they are, by their thieving look and the random fashion in which they ride!"

"Sioux. or devils, they shall find us men!" said the bee-hunter, with a mien as fierce as if he led a party of superior strength, and of a courage equal to his own. "You have a piece, old man, and will pull a trigger in behalf of a helpless Christian girl?"

"Down, down into the grass—down with ye both!" whispered the trapper, intimating to them to turn aside to the tall weeds, which grew in a denser body than common near the place where they stood. "You've not the time to fly, nor the numbers to fight, foolish boy. Down into the grass, if you prize the young woman, or value the gift of life!"

His remonstrance, seconded as it was by a prompt, energetic action, did not fail to produce the submission to his order which the occasion seemed, indeed, imperiously to require. The moon had fallen behind a sheet of thin, fleecy clouds, which skirted the horizon, leaving just enough of its faint and fluctuating light to render objects visible, dimly revealing their forms and proportions. The trapper, by exercising that species of influence over his companions which experience and decision usually assert in cases of emergencies, had effectually succeeded in concealing them in the grass; and, by the aid of the feeble rays of the luminary, he was en-

abled to scan the disorderly party which was riding, like so many madmen, directly upon them.

A band of beings, who resembled demons rather than men, sporting in their nightly revels across the bleak plain, was in truth approaching at a fearful rate, and in a direction that would leave little hope that some one among them, at least, would not pass over the spot where the trapper and his companions lay. At intervals, the clattering of hoofs was borne along by the night wind, quite audibly in their front, and then again their progress through the fog of the autumnal grass was swift and silent; adding to the unearthly appearance of the spectacle. The trapper, who had called in his hound, and bidden him crouch at his side, now kneeled in the cover also, and kept a keen and watchful eye on the route of the band, soothing the fears of the girl, and restraining the impatience of the youth in the same breath.

"If there's one, there's thirty of the miscreants!" he said, in a sort of episode to his whispered comments. "Ay, ay; they are edging toward the river.—Peace, pup, peace.—No, here they come this way again—the thieves don't seem to know their own errand! If there were just six of us, lad, what a beautiful ambushment we might make upon them from this very spot!—it won't do, it won't do, boy; keep yourself closer, or your head will be seen—besides, I'm not altogether strong in the opinion it would be lawful, as they have done us no harm. There they bend again to the river—no; here they come up the swell. Now is the moment to be as still as if the breath had done its duty, and departed the body."

The old man sank into the grass while he was speaking, as if the final separation to which he alluded had in his own case actually occurred; and, at the next instant, a band of wild horsemen whirled by them, with the noiseless rapidity in which it might be imagined a troop of specters would pass. The dark and fleeting forms were already vanished, when the trapper ventured to raise his head to a level with the top of the bending herbage, motioning at the same time to

his companions to maintain their positions and their silence.

"They are going down the swell toward the encampment," he continued, in his former guarded tones; "no, they halt in the bottom, and are clustering together like deer in council. By the Lord, they are turning again, and we are not yet done with the reptiles!"

Once more he sought his friendly cover, and at the next instant the dark troop were to be seen riding, in a disorderly manner, on the very summit of the little elevation on which the trapper and his companions lay. It was now soon apparent that they had returned to avail themselves of the height of the ground, in order to examine the dim horizon.

Some dismounted, while others rode to and fro, like men engaged in a local inquiry of much interest. Happily for the hidden party, the grass in which they were concealed not only served to screen them from the eyes of the savages, but opposed an obstacle to prevent their horses, which were no less rude and untrained than their riders, from trampling on them, in their irregular and wild paces.

At length an athletic and dark-looking Indian, who, by his air of authority, would seem to be the leader, summoned his chiefs about him, to a consultation, which was held mounted. This body was collected on the very margin of that mass of herbage in which the trapper and his companions were hid. As the young man looked up and saw the fierce aspect of the group, which was increasing at each instant by the accession of some countenance and figure apparently more forbidding than any which had preceded it, he drew his rifle by a very natural impulse from beneath him, and commenced putting it in a state for service. The female at his side buried her face in the grass, by a feeling that was, possibly, quite as natural to her sex and habits, leaving him to follow the impulses of his hot blood; but his aged and more prudent adviser whispered sternly in his ear:

"The tick of the lock is as well known to the knaves as the blast of a trumpet to a soldier! lay down the piece—lay down

the piece—should the moon touch the barrel, it could not fail to be seen by the devils, whose eyes are keener than the blackest snake's! The smallest motion, now, would be sure to bring an arrow among us."

The bee-hunter so far obeyed as to continue immovable and silent. But there was still sufficient light to convince his companion, by the contracted brow and threatening eye of the young man, that a discovery would not bestow a bloodless victory on the savages. Finding his advice disregarded, the trapper took his measures accordingly, and awaited the result with a resignation and calmness that were characteristic of the individual.

In the meantime the Sioux (for the sagacity of the old man was not deceived in the character of his dangerous neighbors) had terminated their council, and were again dispersed along the ridge of land as if they sought some hidden object.

"The imps have heard the hound!" whispered the trapper, "and their ears are too true to be cheated in the distance. Keep close, lad, keep close; down with your head to the very earth, like a dog that sleeps!"

"Let us rather take to our feet and trust to manhood," returned his impatient companion.

He would have proceeded; but feeling a hand laid rudely on his shoulder, he turned his eyes upwards, and beheld the dark and savage countenance of an Indian gleaming full upon him. Notwithstanding the surprise and the disadvantage of his attitude, the youth was not disposed to become a captive so easily. Quicker than a flash of his own gun he sprang upon his feet and was throttling his opponent with a power that would soon have terminated the contest, when he felt the arms of the trapper thrown around his body, confining his exertions by a strength very little inferior to his own. Before he had time to reproach his comrade for this apparent treachery, a dozen Sioux were around them, and the whole party were compelled to yield themselves as prisoners.

CHAPTER IV.

—"With much more dismay
I view the fight than those who make the fray."
—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE unfortunate bee-hunter and his companions had become the captives of a people who might, without exaggeration, be called the Ishmaelites of the American deserts. From time immemorial the hands of the Sioux had been turned against their neighbors of the prairies; and even at this day, when the influence and authority of a civilized government are beginning to be felt around them, they are considered a treacherous and dangerous race. At the period of our tale the case was far worse; few white men trusting themselves in the remote and unprotected regions where so false a tribe was known to dwell.

Notwithstanding the peaceable submission of the trapper, he was quite aware of the character of the band into whose hands he had fallen. It would have been difficult, however, for the nicest judge to have determined whether fear, policy or resignation formed the secret motive of the old man in permitting himself to be plundered as he did, without a murmur. So far from opposing any remonstrance to the rude and violent manner in which his conquerors performed the customary office, he even anticipated their cupidity by tendering to the chiefs such articles as he thought might prove the most acceptable. On the other hand, Paul Hover, who had been literally a conquered man, manifested the strongest repugnance to submitting to the violent liberties that were taken with his person and property. He even gave several exceedingly unequivocal demonstrations of his displeasure during the summary process, and would more than once have broken out in open and desperate resistance but for the admonitions and entreaties of the trembling girl, who clung to his side in a manner so dependent as to show the youth that her hopes were now placed no less on his discretion than on his disposition to serve her.

The Indians had, however, no sooner

deprived the captives of their arms and ammunition, and stripped them of a few articles of dress of little use, and perhaps of less value, than they appeared disposed to grant them a respite. Business of greater moment pressed on their hands, and required their attention. Another consultation of the chiefs was convened, and it was apparent, by the earnest and vehement manner of the few who spoke, that the warriors conceived their success as yet to be far from complete.

"It will be well," whispered the trapper, who knew enough of the language he heard to comprehend perfectly the subject of the discussion, "if the travelers who lie near the willow-brake are not awoke out of their sleep by a visit from these miscreants. They are too cunning to believe that a woman of the 'pale-faces' is to be found so far from the settlements, without having a white man's inventions and comforts at hand."

"If they will carry the tribe of wandering Ishmael to the Rocky Mountains," said the young bee-hunter, laughing in his vexation with a sort of bitter merriment, "I may forgive the rascals."

"Paul! Paul!" exclaimed his companion, in a tone of reproach, "you forget all! Think of the dreadful consequences!"

"Ay, it was thinking of what you call consequences, Ellen, that prevented me from putting the matter, at once, to yonder red-devil, and making it a real knock down and drag-out! Old trapper, the sin of this cowardly business lies on your shoulders! But it is no more than your daily calling, I reckon, to take men, as well as beasts, in snares."

"I implore you, Paul, to be calm—to be patient."

"Well, since it is your wish, Ellen," returned the youth, endeavoring to swallow his spleen, "I will make the trial; though, as you ought to know, it is part of the religion of a Kentuckian to fret himself a little at a mischance."

"I fear your friends in the other bottom will not escape the eyes of the imps!" continued the trapper, as coolly as though he had not heard a syllable of the intervening discourse. "They scent plunder;

and it would be as hard to drive a hound from his game as to throw the varmints from its trail."

"Is there nothing to be done?" asked Ellen, in an imploring manner, which proved the sincerity of her concern.

"It would be an easy matter to call out in so loud a voice as to make old Ishmael dream that the wolves were among his flock," Paul replied; "I can make myself heard a mile in these open fields, and his camp is but a short quarter from us."

"And get knocked on the head for your pains," returned the trapper. "No, no; cunning must match cunning, or the hounds will murder the whole family."

"Murder! no—no murder. Ishmael loves travel so well, there would be no harm in his having a look at the other sea, but the old fellow is in a bad condition to take the long journey! I would try a lock myself before he should be quite murdered."

"His party is strong in number and well armed: do you think it will fight?"

"Look here, old trapper, few men love Ishmael Bush and his seven sledge-hammer sons less than one Paul Hover, but I scorn to slander even a Tennessee shotgun. There is as much of the true stand-up courage among them as there is in any family that was ever raised in Kentucky itself. They are a long-sided and double-jointed breed; and let me tell you that he who takes the measure of one of them on the ground, must be a workman at a hug."

"Hist! the savages have done their talk and are about to set their accursed devices in motion. Let us be patient, something may yet offer in favor of your friends."

"Friends! call none of the race a friend of mine, trapper, if you have the smallest regard for my affection. What I say in their favor is less from love than honesty."

"I did not know but the young woman was of the kin," returned the other, a little dryly—"but no offense should be taken where none was intended."

The mouth of Paul was again stopped by the hand of Ellen, who took upon herself to reply in her conciliating tones: "We should be all of a family when it is in our

power to serve each other. We depend entirely on your experience, honest old man, to discover the means to apprise our friends of their danger."

"There will be a real time of it," muttered the bee-hunter, laughing, "if the boys get at work, in good earnest, with these red-skins!"

He was interrupted by a general movement which took place among the band. The Indians dismounted to a man, giving their horses in charge to three or four of the party, who were also entrusted with the safe keeping of the prisoners. They then formed themselves into a circle around a warrior who appeared to possess the chief authority; and at a given signal the whole array moved slowly and cautiously from the center in straight and consequently in diverging lines. Most of their dark forms were soon blended with the brown covering of the prairie; though the captives, who watched the slightest movement of their enemies with vigilant eyes, were now and then enabled to discern a human figure drawn against the horizon, as some one, more eager than the rest, rose to his greatest height in order to extend the limits of his view. But it was not long before even these fugitive glimpses of the moving and constantly increasing circle were lost, and uncertainty and conjecture were added to apprehension. In this manner passed many anxious and weary minutes, during the close of which the listeners expected at each moment to hear the whoop of the assailants and the shrieks of the assailed, rising together on the stillness of the night. But it would seem that the search, which was so evidently making, was without a sufficient object; for at the expiration of half an hour the different individuals of the band began to return singly, gloomy and sullen, like men who were disappointed.

"Our time is at hand," observed the trapper, who noted the smallest incident, or the slightest indication of hostility among the savages; "we are now to be questioned; and, if I know anything of the policy of our case, I should say it would be wise to choose one among us

to hold the discourse, in order that our testimony may agree. And, furthermore, if an opinion from one as old and as worthless as a hunter of fourscore is to be regarded, I would just venture to say that man should be the one most skilled in the natur' of an Indian, and that he should also know something of their language. Are you acquainted with the tongue of the Sioux, friend ? ”

“Swarm your own hive,” returned the discontented bee-hunter. “You are good at buzzing, old trapper, if you are good at nothing else.”

“’Tis the gift of youth to be rash and heady,” the trapper calmly retorted. “The day has been, boy, when my blood was like your own, too swift and too hot to run quietly in my veins. But what will it profit to talk of silly risks and foolish acts at this time of life ? A gray head should cover a brain of reason, and not the tongue of a boaster.”

“True, true,” whispered Ellen ; “and we have other things to attend to now ! Here comes the Indian to put his questions.”

The girl, whose apprehensions had quickened her senses, was not deceived. She was yet speaking when a tall, half-naked savage approached the spot where they stood, and after examining the whole party as closely as the dim light permitted, for more than a minute in perfect stillness, he gave the usual salutation in the harsh and guttural tones of his own language. The trapper replied as well as he could, which it seems was sufficiently well to be understood. In order to escape the imputation of pedantry, we shall render the substance, and, so far as it is possible, the form of the dialogue that succeeded, into the English tongue.

“Have the pale-faces eaten their own buffaloes, and taken the skins from all their own beavers,” continued the savage, allowing the usual moment of decorum to elapse, after the words of greeting, before he again spoke, “that they come to count how many are left among the Pawnees ? ”

“Some of us are here to buy, and some to sell,” returned the trapper ; “but none

will follow, if they hear it is not safe to come nigh the lodge of a Sioux.”

“The Sioux are thieves, and they live among the snow ; why do we talk of a people who are so far, when we are in the country of the Pawnees ? ”

“If the Pawnees are owners of this land, then white and red are here by equal right.”

“Have not the pale-faces stolen enough from the red men, that you come so far to carry a lie ? I have said that this is a hunting-ground of my tribe.”

“My right to be here is equal to your own,” the trapper rejoined, with undisturbed coolness ; “I do not speak as I might—it is better to be silent. The Pawnees and the white men are brothers, but a Sioux dare not show his face in the village of the Loups.”

“The Dahcotahs are men ! ” exclaimed the savage, fiercely ; forgetting in his anger to maintain the character he had assumed, and using the appellation of which his nation was most proud ; “the Dahcotahs have no fear ! Speak—what brings you so far from the villages of the pale-faces ? ”

“I have seen the sun rise and set on many councils, and have heard the words of wise men. Let your chiefs come, and my mouth shall not be shut.”

“I am a great chief ! ” said the savage, affecting an air of offended dignity. “Do you take me for an Assiniboine ? Weucha is a warrior often named, and much believed ! ”

“Am I a fool not to know a burnt-wood Teton ? ” demanded the trapper, with a steadiness that did great credit to his nerves. “Go ; it is dark, and you do not see that my head is gray ! ”

The Indian now appeared convinced that he had adopted too shallow an artifice to deceive one so practiced as the man he addressed ; and he was deliberating what fiction he should next invent, in order to obtain his real object, when a slight commotion among the band put an end at once to all his schemes. Casting his eyes behind him, as if fearful of a speedy interruption, he said, in tones much less pretending than those he had first resorted to—

"Give Weucha the milk of the Long-knives, and he will sing your name in the ears of the great men of his tribe."

"Go," repeated the trapper, motioning him away, with strong disgust. "Your young men are speaking of Mahtoree. My words are for the ears of a chief."

The savage cast a look on the other, which notwithstanding the dim light, was sufficiently indicative of implacable hostility. He then stole away among his fellows, anxious to conceal the counterfeit he had attempted to practice, no less than the treachery he had contemplated against a fair division of the spoils, from the man named by the trapper, whom he now also knew to be approaching, by the manner in which his name passed from one to another in the band. He had hardly disappeared before a warrior of powerful frame advanced out of the dark circle and placed himself before the captives, with that high and proud bearing for which a distinguished Indian chief is ever so remarkable. He was followed by all the party, who arranged themselves around his person in a deep and respectful silence.

"The earth is very large," the chief commenced, after a pause of that true dignity which his counterfeit had so miserably affected; "why can the children of my great white father never find room on it?"

"Some among them have heard that their friends in the prairies are in want of many things," returned the trapper; "and they have come to see if it be true. Some want, in their turns, what the red men are willing to sell, and they come to make their friends rich with powder and blankets."

"Do traders cross the big river with empty hands?"

"Our hands are empty because your young men thought we were tired, and they have lightened us of our load. They were mistaken; I am old, but I am still strong."

"It cannot be. Your load has fallen in the prairies. Show my young men the place, that they may pick it up before the Pawnees find it."

"The path to the spot is crooked, and

it is night. The hour is come for sleep," said the trapper, with perfect composure. "Bid your warriors go over yonder hill; there is water and there is wood; let them light their fires and sleep with warm feet. When the sun comes again I will speak to you."

A low murmur, but one that was clearly indicative of dissatisfaction, passed among the attentive listeners, and served to inform the old man that he had not been sufficiently wary in proposing a measure that he intended should notify the travelers in the brake of the presence of their dangerous neighbors. Mahtoree, however, without betraying in the slightest degree the excitement which was so strongly exhibited by his companions, continued the discourse in the same lofty manner as before.

"I know that my friend is rich," he said; "that he has many warriors not far off, and that horses are plentier with him than dogs among the red-skins."

"You see my warriors and my horses."

"What! has the woman the feet of a Dahcotah, that she can walk for thirty nights in the prairies and not fall? I know the red men of the woods make long marches on foot, but we, who live where the eye cannot see from one lodge to another, love our horses."

The trapper now hesitated in his turn. He was perfectly aware that deception, if detected, might prove dangerous; and, for one of his pursuits and character, he was strongly troubled with an unaccommodating regard for the truth. But recollecting that he controlled the fate of others as well as of himself, he determined to let things take their course, and to permit the Dahcotah chief to deceive himself if he would.

"The women of the Sioux and of the white men are not of the same wigwam," he answered evasively. "Would a Teton warrior make his wife greater than himself? I know he would not; and yet my ears have heard that there are lands where the councils are held by squaws."

Another slight movement in the dark circle apprised the trapper that his declaration was not received without surprise,

if entirely without distrust. The chief alone seemed unmoved; nor was he disposed to relax from the loftiness and high dignity of his air.

"My white fathers who live in the great lakes have declared," he said, "that their brothers toward the rising sun are not men; and now I know they did not lie! Go!—what is a nation whose chief is a squaw? Are you the dog and not the husband of this woman?"

"I am neither. Never did I see her face before this day. She came into the prairies because they had told her a great and generous nation called the Dahcotahs lived there, and she wished to look on men. The women of the pale-faces, like the women of the Sioux, open their eyes to see things that are new; but she is poor, like myself, and she will want corn and buffaloes, if you take away the little that she and her friend still have."

"My ears listen to many wicked lies!" exclaimed the Teton warrior, in a voice so stern that it startled even his red auditors. "Am I a woman? Has not a Dahcotah eyes? Tell me, white hunter, who are the men of your color that sleep near the fallen trees?"

As he spoke the indignant chief pointed in the direction of Ishmael's encampment, leaving the trapper no reason to doubt that the superior industry and sagacity of this man had effected a discovery which had eluded the search of the rest of his party. Notwithstanding his regret at an event that might prove fatal to the sleepers, and some little vexation at having been so completely outwitted in the dialogue just related, the old man continued to maintain his air of inflexible composure.

"It may be true," he answered, "that white men are sleeping in the prairie. If my brother says it, it is true; but what men thus trust to the generosity of the Tletons, I cannot tell. If there be strangers asleep, send your young men to wake them up, and let them say why they are here; every pale-face has a tongue."

The chief shook his head with a wild and fierce smile, answering abruptly as he turned away to put an end to the conference—

"The Dahocotahs are a wise race, and Mahtoree is their chief! He will not call to the strangers that they may rise and speak to him with their carabines. He will whisper softly in their ears. When this is done let the men of their own color come and awake them."

As he uttered these words and turned on his heel, a low and approving laugh passed around the dark circle, which instantly broke its order, and followed him to a little distance from the stand of the captives, where those who might presume to mingle opinions with so great a warrior again gathered about him in consultation. Weucha profited by this occasion to renew his importunities; but the trapper, who had discovered how great a counterfeit he was, shook him off in displeasure. An end was, however, more effectually put to the annoyance of this malignant savage by a mandate for the whole party, including men and beasts, to change their positions. The movement was made in dead silence, and with an order that would have done credit to more enlightened beings. A halt, however, was soon made; and when the captives had time to look about them, they found they were in view of the low, dark outline of the copse near which lay the slumbering party of Ishmael.

Here another short but grave and deliberate consultation was held.

The beasts, which seemed trained to such covert and silent attacks, were once more placed under the care of keepers, who, as before, were charged with the duty of watching the prisoners. The mind of the trapper was in no degree relieved from the uneasiness which was at each instant getting a stronger possession of him, when he found Weucha was placed nearest to his own person, and, as it appeared by the air of triumph and authority he assumed, at the head of the guard also. The savage, however, who doubtless had his secret instructions, was content, for the present, with making a significant gesture with his tomahawk, which menaced death to Ellen. After admonishing in this expressive manner his male captives of the fate that would instantly attend their female companion on the slightest

alarm proceeding from any of the party, he was content to maintain a rigid silence. This unexpected forbearance on the part of Weucha enabled the trapper and his two associates to give their undivided attention to the little that might be seen of the interesting movements which were passing in their front.

Mahtoree took the entire disposition of the arrangements on himself. He pointed out the precise situation he wished each individual to occupy, like one intimately acquainted with the qualifications of his respective followers, and he was obeyed with the deference and promptitude with which an Indian warrior is wont to submit to the instructions of his chief in moments of trial. Some he dispatched to the right and others to the left. Each man departed with the noiseless and quick step peculiar to the race, until all had assumed their allotted stations, with the exception of two chosen warriors, who remained nigh the person of their leader. When the rest had disappeared, Mahtoree turned to these selected companions, and intimated by a sign that the critical moment had arrived when the enterprise he contemplated was to be put in execution.

Each man laid aside the light fowling-piece which, under the name of a carabine, he carried in virtue of his rank; and divesting himself of every article of exterior or heavy clothing, he stood resembling a dark and fierce-looking statue, in the attitude, and nearly in the garb, of nature. Mahtoree assured himself of the right position of his tomahawk, felt that his knife was secure in its sheath of skin, tightened his girdle of wampum, and saw that the lacing of his fringed and ornamented leggings was secure, and likely to offer no impediment to his exertions. Thus prepared at all points, and ready for his desperate undertaking, the Teton gave the signal to proceed.

The three advanced in a line with the encampment of the travelers, until, in the dim light by which they were seen, their dusky forms were nearly lost to the eyes of the prisoners. Here they paused, looking around them like men who deliberate and ponder long on the consequences be-

fore they take a desperate leap. Then, sinking together, they became lost in the grass of the prairie.

It is not difficult to imagine the distress and anxiety of the different spectators of these threatening movements. Whatever might be the reasons of Ellen for entertaining so strong attachment to the family in which she has first been seen by the reader, the feelings of her sex and, perhaps, some lingering seeds of kindness, predominated. More than once she felt tempted to brave the awful and instant danger that awaited such an offense, and to raise her feeble, and, in truth, impotent voice in warning. So strong, indeed, and so very natural was the inclination, that she would most probably have put it into execution, but for the often repeated, though whispered remonstrances of Paul Hover. In the breast of the young bee-hunter himself there was a singular union of emotion. His first and chiefest solicitude was certainly in behalf of his gentle and dependent companion; but the sense of her danger was mingled, in the breast of the reckless woodsman, with a consciousness of a high and wild, and by no means an unpleasant excitement. Though united to the emigrants by ties still less binding than those of Ellen, he longed to hear the crack of their rifles, and, had occasion offered, he would gladly have been among the first to rush to their rescue. There were, in truth, moments when he felt in his turn an impulse that was nearly resistless, to spring forward and awake the unconscious sleepers; but a glance at Ellen would serve to recall his tottering prudence, and to admonish him of the consequences. The trapper alone remained calm and observant, as if nothing that involved his personal comfort or safety had occurred. His ever-moving, vigilant eyes watched the smallest change with the composure of one too long inured to scenes of danger to be easily moved, and with an expression of cool determination which denoted the intention he actually harbored, of profiting by the smallest oversight on the part of the captors.

In the meantime the Teton warriors had not been idle. Profiting by the high fog

which grew in the bottoms, they had wormed their way through the matted grass, like so many treacherous serpents stealing on their prey, until the point was gained where an extraordinary caution became necessary to their further advance. Mahtoree alone had occasionally elevated his dark grim countenance above the herbage, straining his eyeballs to penetrate the gloom which skirted the border of the brake. In these momentary glances he gained sufficient knowledge, added to that he had obtained in his former search, to be the perfect master of the position of his intended victims, though he was still profoundly ignorant of their number and of their means of defense.

His efforts to possess himself of the requisite knowledge concerning these two latter and essential points were, however, completely baffled by the stillness of the camp, which lay in a quiet as deep as if it were literally a place of the dead. Too wary and distrustful to rely in circumstances of so much doubt on the discretion of any less firm and crafty than himself, the Dahcotah bade his companions remain where they lay, and pursued the adventure alone.

The progress of Mahtoree was now slow, and, to one less accustomed to such a species of exercise, it would have proved painfully laborious. But the advance of the wily snake itself is not more certain or noiseless than was his approach. He drew his form, foot by foot, through the bending grass, pausing at each movement to catch the smallest sound that might betray any knowledge, on the part of the travelers, of his proximity. He succeeded, at length, in dragging himself out of the sickly light of the moon into the shadows of the brake, where not only his own dark person was much less liable to be seen, but where the surrounding objects became more distinctly visible to his keen and active glances.

Here the Teton paused long and warily to make his observations before he ventured further. His position enabled him to bring the whole encampment, with its tent, wagons and lodges, into a dark but clearly marked profile; furnishing a clew

by which the practiced warrior was led to a tolerably accurate estimate of the force he was about to encounter. Still an unnatural silence pervaded the spot, as if men suppressed even the quiet breathings of sleep, in order to render the appearance of their confidence more evident. The chief bent his head to the earth and listened intently. He was about to raise it again, in disappointment, when the long-drawn and trembling respiration of one who slumbered imperfectly met his ear. The Indian was too well skilled in all the means of deception to become himself the victim of any common artifice. He knew the sound to be natural, by its peculiar quivering, and he hesitated no longer.

A man of nerves less tried than those of the fierce and conquering Mahtoree would have been keenly sensible of all the hazard he incurred. The reputation of those hardy and powerful white adventurers who so often penetrated the wilds inhabited by his people was well known to him; but while he drew nigher, with the respect and caution that a brave enemy never fails to inspire, it was with the vindictive animosity of a red man, jealous and resentful of the inroads of the stranger.

Turning from the line of his former route, the Teton dragged himself directly toward the margin of the thicket. When this material object was effected in safety, he rose to his seat, and took a better survey of his situation. A single moment served to apprise him of the place where the unsuspecting traveler lay. The reader will readily anticipate that the savage had succeeded in gaining a dangerous proximity to one of those slothful sons of Ishmael who were deputed to watch over the isolated encampment of the travelers.

When certain that he was undiscovered, the Dahcotah raised his person again, and bending forward, he moved his dark visage above the face of the sleeper, in that sort of wanton and subtle manner with which the reptile is seen to play about its victim before it strikes. Satisfied at length, not only of the condition but of the character of the stranger, Mahtoree was in the act of withdrawing his head when a slight

movement of the sleeper announced the symptoms of reviving consciousness. The savage seized the knife which hung at his girdle, and in an instant it was poised above the breast of the young emigrant. Then changing his purpose, with an action as rapid as his own flashing thoughts, he sank back behind the trunk of the fallen tree against which the other reclined, and lay in its shadow, as dark, as motionless, and apparently as insensible as the wood itself.

The slothful sentinel opened his heavy eyes, and, gazing upward for a moment at the hazy heavens, he made an extraordinary exertion, and raised his powerful frame from the support of the log. Then he looked about him, with an air of something like watchfulness, suffering his dull glances to run over the misty objects of the encampment until they finally settled on the distant and dim field of the open prairie. Meeting with nothing more attractive than the same faint outlines of swell and interval which everywhere rose before his drowsy eyes, he changed his position so as completely to turn his back on his dangerous neighbor, and suffered his person to sink sluggishly down into its former recumbent attitude. A long, and, on the part of the Teton, an anxious and painful silence succeeded, before the deep breathing of the traveler again announced that he was indulging in his slumbers. The savage was, however, far too jealous of a counterfeit to trust to the first appearance of sleep. But the fatigues of a day of unusual toil lay too heavy on the sentinel to leave the other long in doubt. Still the motion with which Mahtoree again raised himself to his knees was so noiseless and guarded, that even a vigilant observer might have hesitated to believe he stirred. The change was, however, at length effected, and the Dahcotah chief then bent again over his enemy, without having produced a noise louder than that of the cotton-wood leaf which fluttered at his side in the currents of the passing air.

Mahtoree now felt himself master of the sleeper's fate. At the same time that he scanned the vast proportions and athletic

limbs of the youth, in that sort of admiration which physical excellence seldom fails to excite in the breast of a savage, he coolly prepared to extinguish the principle of vitality which could alone render them formidable. After making himself sure of the seat of life by gently removing the folds of the intervening cloth, he raised his keen weapon, and was about to unite his strength and skill in the impending blow, when the young man threw his brawny arm carelessly backward, exhibiting in the action the vast volume of its muscles.

The sagacious and wary Teton paused. It struck his acute faculties that sleep was less dangerous to him at that moment than even death itself might prove. The smallest noise, the agony of struggling, with which such a frame would probably relinquish its hold of life, suggested themselves to his rapid thoughts, and were all present to his experienced senses. He looked back into the encampment, turned his head into the thicket, and glanced his glowing eyes abroad into the wild and silent prairies. Bending once more over the respited victim, he assured himself that he was sleeping heavily, and then abandoned his immediate purpose in obedience alone to the suggestions of a more crafty policy.

The retreat of Mahtoree was as still and guarded as had been his approach. He now took the direction of the encampment, stealing along the margin of the brake, as a cover into which he might easily plunge at the smallest alarm. The drapery of the solitary hut attracted his notice in passing. After examining the whole of its exterior, and listening with painful intensity, in order to gather counsel from his ears, the savage ventured to raise the cloth at the bottom, and to thrust his dark visage beneath. It might have been a minute before the Teton chief drew back, and seated himself with the whole of his form without the linen tenement. Here he sat, seemingly brooding over his discovery, for many moments, in rigid inaction. Then he resumed his crouching attitude, and once more projected his visage beyond the covering of the tent. His



"The tick of the lock is as well known to the knaves as the blast of a trumpet to a soldier! lay down the piece—lay down the piece."
—*The Prairie.*

second visit to the interior was longer, and, if possible, more ominous than the first. But it had, like everything else, its termination, and the savage again withdrew his glaring eyes from the secrets of the place.

Mahtoree had drawn his person many yards from the spot in his slow progress toward the cluster of objects which pointed out the center of the position, before he again stopped. He made another pause, and looked back at the solitary little dwelling he had left, as if doubtful whether he should not return. But the *chevaux de frise* of branches now lay within reach of his arm, and the very appearance of precaution it presented as it announced the value of the effects it encircled, tempted his cupidity, and induced him to proceed.

The passage of the savage through the tender and brittle limbs of the cottonwood, could be likened only to the sinuous and noiseless winding of the reptiles which he imitated. When he had effected his object, and had taken an instant to become acquainted with the nature of the localities within the enclosure, the Teton used the precaution to open a way through which he might make a swift retreat. Then, raising himself on his feet, he stalked through the encampment like the master of evil, seeking whom and what he should first devote to his fell purposes. He had already ascertained the contents of the lodge in which were collected the woman and her young children, and had passed several gigantic frames stretched on different piles of brush, which happily for him lay in unconscious helplessness, when he reached the spot occupied by Ishmael in person. It could not escape the sagacity of one like Mahtoree, that he had now within his power the principal man among the travelers. He stood long hovering above the recumbent and Herculean form of the emigrant, keenly debating in his own mind the chances of his enterprise, and the most effectual means of reaping its richest harvest.

He sheathed the knife, which, under the hasty and burning impulse of his thoughts he had been tempted to draw, and was

passing on, when Ishmael turned in his lair, and demanded roughly who was moving before his half-opened eyes. Nothing short of the readiness and cunning of a savage could have evaded the crisis. Imitating the gruff tones and nearly unintelligible sounds he heard, Mahtoree threw his body heavily on the earth, and appeared to dispose himself to sleep. Though the whole movement was seen by Ishmael, in a sort of stupid observation, the artifice was too bold and too admirably executed to fail. The drowsy father closed his eyes, and slept heavily, with his treacherous inmate in the very bosom of his family.

It was necessary for the Teton to maintain the position he had taken for many long and weary minutes, in order to make sure that he was no longer watched. Though his body lay so motionless, his active mind was not idle. He profited by the delay to mature a plan which he intended should put the whole encampment, including both its effects and their proprietors, entirely at his mercy. The instant he could do so with safety, the indefatigable savage was again in motion. He took his way toward the slight pen which contained the domestic animals, worming himself along the ground in his former subtle and guarded manner.

The first animal he encountered among the beasts occasioned a long and hazardous delay. The wary creature, perhaps conscious, through its secret instinct, that in the endless wastes of the prairies its surest protector was to be found in man, was so exceedingly docile as quietly to submit to the close examination it was doomed to undergo. The hand of the wandering Teton passed over the downy coat, the meek countenance, and the slender limbs of the gentle creature with untiring curiosity; but he finally abandoned the prize as useless in his predatory expeditions, and offering too little temptation to the appetite. As soon, however, as he found himself among the beasts of burden, his gratification was extreme, and it was with difficulty that he restrained the customary ejaculations of pleasure that were more than once on the point of

bursting from his lips. Here he lost sight of the hazards by which he had gained access to his dangerous position; and the watchfulness of the wary and long practiced warrior was momentarily forgotten in the exultation of the savage.

CHAPTER V.

"Why, worthy father, what have we to lose?"

—The law

Protects us not. Then why should we be tender
To let an arrogant piece of flesh threaten us!
Play judge and executioner."

—CYMBELINE.

WHILE the Teton thus enacted his subtle and characteristic part, not a sound broke the stillness of the surrounding prairie. The whole band lay at their several posts, waiting with the well-known patience of the natives for the signal which was to summon them to action. To the eyes of the anxious spectators who occupied the little eminence, already described as the position of the captives, the scene presented the broad, solemn view of a waste, dimly lighted by the glimmering rays of a clouded moon. The place of the encampment was marked by a gloom deeper, than that which faintly shadowed out the courses of the bottoms, and here and there a brighter streak tinged the rolling summits of the ridges. As for the rest it was the deep, imposing quiet of a desert.

But to those who so well knew how much was brooding beneath this mantle of stillness and night, it was a scene of high and wild excitement. Their anxiety gradually increased, as minute after minute passed away, and not the smallest sound of life arose out of the calm and darkness which enveloped the brake. The breathing of Paul grew louder and deeper, and more than once Ellen trembled at she knew not what, as she felt the quivering of his active frame, while she leaned dependently on his arm for support.

The shallow honesty, as well as the besetting infirmity of Weucha, had already been exhibited. The reader, therefore, will not be surprised to learn that he

was the first to forget the regulations he had himself imposed. It was at the precise moment when we left Mahtoree yielding to his nearly ungovernable delight, as he surveyed the number and quality of Ishmael's beasts of burden, that the man he had selected to watch his captives chose to indulge in the malignant pleasure of tormenting those it was his duty to protect. Bending his head nigh the ear of the trapper, the savage rather muttered than whispered:

"If the Tetons lose their great chief by the hands of the Long-knives,* old shall die as well as young!"

"Life is the gift of the Wahcondah," was the unmoved reply. "The burnt-wood warrior must submit to his laws, as well as his other children. Men only die when *He* chooses; and no Dahcotah can change the hour."

"Look!" returned the savage, thrusting the blade of his knife before the face of his captive. "Weucha is the Wahcondah of a dog!"

The old man raised his eyes to the fierce visage of his keeper, and, for a moment, a gleam of honest and powerful disgust shot from their deep cells; but it instantly passed away, leaving in its place an expression of commiseration, if not of sorrow.

"Why should one made in the real image of God suffer his nature to be provoked by a mere effigy of reason?" he said in English, and in tones much louder than those in which Weucha had chosen to pitch the conversation. The latter profited by the unintentional offense of his captive, and, seizing him by the thin, gray locks that fell from beneath his cap, was on the point of passing the blade of his knife in malignant triumph around their roots, when a long shrill yell rent the air, and was instantly echoed from the surrounding waste, as if a thousand demons opened their throats in common at the summons. Weucha relinquished his grasp, and uttered a cry of exultation.

"Now!" shouted Paul, unable to con-

*The whites are so called by the Indians, from their swords.

trol his impatience any longer, "now, old Ishmael, is the time to show the native blood of Kentucky! Fire low, boys—level into the swales, for the red-skins are settling to the very earth!"

His voice was, however, lost, or rather unheeded, in the midst of the shrieks, shouts, and yells that were, by this time, bursting from fifty mouths on every side of him. The guards still maintained their posts at the side of the captives, but it was with that sort of difficulty with which steeds are restrained at the starting-post, when expecting the signal to commence the trial of speed. They tossed their arms wildly in the air, leaping up and down more like exulting children than sober men, and continued to utter the most frantic cries.

In the midst of this tumultuous disorder a rushing sound was heard, similar to that which might be expected to precede the passage of a flight of buffaloes, and then came the flocks and cattle of Ishmael in one confused and frightened drove.

"They have robbed the squatter of his beasts!" said the attentive trapper. "The reptiles have left him as hoofless as a beaver!" He was yet speaking when the whole body of the terrified animals rose the little acclivity, and swept by the place where he stood, followed by a band of dusky and demon-like-looking figures, who pressed madly on their rear.

The impulse was communicated to the Teton horses, long accustomed to sympathize in the untutored passions of the owners, and it was with difficulty that the keepers were enabled to restrain their impatience. At this moment, when all eyes were directed to the passing whirlwind of men and beasts, the trapper caught the knife from the hands of his inattentive keeper, with a power that his age would have seemed to contradict, and, at a single blow, severed the thong of hide which connected the whole of the drove. The wild animals snorted with joy and terror, and, tearing the earth with their heels, they dashed away into the broad prairies, in a dozen different directions.

Weucha turned upon his assailant with

the ferocity and agility of a tiger. He felt for the weapon of which he had been so suddenly deprived, fumbled with impotent haste for the handle of his tomahawk, and at the same moment glanced his eyes after the flying cattle, with the longings of a Western Indian. The struggle between thirst for vengeance and cupidity was severe but short. The latter quickly predominated in the bosom of one whose passions were proverbially groveling; and scarcely a moment intervened between the flight of the animals and the swift pursuit of the guards. The trapper had continued calmly facing his foe, during the instant of suspense that succeeded his hardy act; and now that Weucha was seen following his companions, he pointed after the dark train, saying, with his deep and nearly inaudible laugh:

"Red-natur' is red-natur', let it show itself on a prairie or in a forest! A knock on the head would be the smallest reward to him who would take such a liberty with a Christian sentinel; but there goes the Teton after his horses as if he thought two legs as good as four in such a race! And yet the imps will have every hoof of them afore the day sets in, because its reason ag'in instinct. Poor reason, I allow; but still there is a great deal of the man in the Indian. Ah's me! your Delawares were the red-skins of which America might boast; but few and scattered is that mighty people, now! Well! the traveler may just make his pitch where he is; he has plenty of water, though Natur' has cheated him of the pleasure of stripping the 'arth of its lawful trees. He has seen the last of his four-footed creatures, or I am but little skilled in Sioux cunning."

"Had we not better join the party of Ishmael?" said the bee-hunter. "There will be a regular fight about this matter, or the old fellow has suddenly grown chicken-hearted."

"No—no—no!" hastily exclaimed Ellen.

She was stopped by the trapper, who laid his hand gently on her mouth as he answered:

"Hist!—hist!—the sound of voices might bring us into danger. Is your friend," he added, turning to Paul, "a man of spirit enough?"

"Don't call the squatter a friend of mine!" interrupted the youth. "I never yet harbored with one who could not show hand and seal for the land which fed him."

"Well—well. Let it then be acquaintance. Is he a man to maintain his own stoutly, by dint of powder and lead?"

"His own! ay, and that which is not his own, too! Can you tell me, old trapper, who held the rifle that did the deed for the sheriff's deputy, that thought to rout the unlawful settlers who had gathered nigh the Buffalo lick in old Kentucky? I had lined a beautiful swarm that very day into the hollow of a dead beech, and there lay the people's officer at its roots, with a hole directly through the 'grace of God' which he carried in his jacket pocket, as if he thought a bit of sheepskin was a breastplate against a squatter's bullet! Now, Ellen, you needn't be troubled; for it never strictly was brought home to him; and there were fifty others who had pitched in that neighborhood with just the same authority from the law."

The poor girl shuddered, struggling powerfully to suppress the sigh which arose in spite of her efforts as if from the bottom of her heart.

Thoroughly satisfied that he understood the character of the emigrants, by the short but comprehensive description conveyed in Paul's reply, the old man raised no further question concerning the readiness of Ishmael to revenge his wrongs, but rather followed the train of thought which was suggested to his experience by the occasion:

"Each one knows the ties which bind him to his fellow-creatures best," he answered. "Though it is greatly to be mourned that color, and property, and tongue, and l'arning, should make so wide a difference in those who, after all, are but children of one Father! Howsomever," he continued, by a transition not a little characteristic of the pursuits and feelings

of the man, "as this is a business in which there is much more likelihood of a fight than need for a sermon, it is best to be prepared for what may follow. Hush! there is a movement below; it is an equal chance that we are seen."

"The family is stirring," cried Ellen, with a tremor that announced nearly as much terror at the approach of her friends as she had before manifested at the presence of her enemies. "Go, Paul, leave me. *You*, at least, must not be seen!"

"If I leave you, Ellen, in this desert, before I see you safe in the care of old Ishmael at least, may I never hear the hum of another bee, or, what is worse, fail in sight to line him to his hive!"

"You forget this good old man. He will not leave me. Though I am sure, Paul, we have parted before, where there has been more of a desert than this."

"Never! These Indians may come whooping back, and then where are you? Half-way to the Rocky Mountains before a man can fairly strike the line of your flight. What think you, old trapper?" How long may it be before these Tetons, as you call them, will be coming for the rest of old Ishmael's goods and chattels?"

"No fear of them," returned the old man, laughing in his own peculiar and silent manner; "I warrant me the devils will be scampering after their beasts these six hours yet! Listen! you may hear them in the willow-bottoms at this very moment; ay, your real Sioux cattle will run like so many long-legged elks. Hist! crouch again into the grass, down with ye both; as I am a miserable piece of clay, I heard the clinking of a gunlock!"

The trapper did not allow his companions to hesitate, but, dragging them both after him, he nearly buried his own person in the fog of the prairie while he was speaking. It was fortunate that the senses of the aged hunter remained so acute, and that he had lost none of his readiness of action. The three were scarcely bowed to the ground when their ears were saluted with three well-known, sharp, short reports of the Western rifle, and instantly the whizzing of the ragged

lead was heard, buzzing within dangerous proximity of their heads.

"Well done, young chips! well done, old block!" whispered Paul, whose spirits no danger nor situation could entirely depress. "As pretty a volley as one would wish to hear on the wrong end of a rifle! What d'ye say, trapper! here is likely to be a three-cornered war. Shall I give 'em as good as they send?"

"Give them nothing but fair words," returned the other, hastily, "or you are both lost."

"I'm not certain it would much mend the matter, if I were to speak with my tongue instead of the piece," said Paul, in a tone half jocular, half bitter.

"For the sake of heaven, do not let them hear you!" cried Ellen. "Go, Paul, go! you can easily quit us now."

Several shots in quick succession, each sending its dangerous messenger still nearer than the preceding discharge, cut short her speech, no less in prudence than in terror.

"This must end," said the trapper, rising with the dignity of one bent only on the importance of his object. "I know not what need ye may have, children, to fear those you should both love and honor, but something must be done to save your lives. A few hours more or less can never be missed from the time of one who has already numbered so many days; therefore, I will advance. Here is a clear space around you. Profit by it as you need, and may God bless and prosper each of you, as ye deserve!"

Without waiting for any reply the trapper walked boldly down the declivity in his front, taking the direction of the encampment, neither quickening his pace in trepidation nor suffering it to be retarded by fear. The light of the moon fell brighter for a moment on his tall, gaunt form, and served to warn the emigrants of his approach. Indifferent, however, to this unfortunate circumstance, he held his way silently and steadily toward the copse, until a threatening voice met him with the challenge of—

"Who comes—friend or foe?"

"Friend," was the reply; "one who has

lived too long to disturb the close of life with quarrels."

"But not so long as to forget the tricks of his youth," said Ishmael, rearing his huge frame from beneath the slight covering of a low bush, and meeting the trapper face to face. "Old man, you have brought this tribe of red devils upon us, and to-morrow you will be sharing the booty."

"What have you lost?" calmly demanded the trapper.

"Eight as good mares as ever traveled in gears, besides a foal that is worth thirty of the brightest Mexicans that bear the face of the King of Spain. Then the woman has not a cloven hoof for her dairy or her loom, and I believe even the grunterns, footsore as they be, are plowing the prairie. And now, stranger," he added, dropping the butt of his rifle on the hard earth, with a violence and a clatter that would have intimidated one less firm than the man he addressed, "how many of these creatures may fall to your lot?"

"Horses have I never craved, nor even used; though few have journeyed over more of the wide lands of America than myself, old and feeble as I seem. But little use is there for a horse among the hills and woods of York—that is, as York was, but as I greatly fear York is no longer. As for woolen covering and cow's milk, I covet no such womanly fashions! The beasts of the field give me food and raiment. No, I crave no cloth better than the skin of a deer, nor any meat richer than its flesh."

The sincere manner of the trapper, as he uttered this simple vindication, was not entirely thrown away on the emigrant, whose dull nature was gradually quickening into a flame that might speedily have burst forth with dangerous violence. He listened like one who doubted, though not entirely convinced; and he muttered between his teeth the denunciation, with which a moment before he intended to precede the summary vengeance he had certainly meditated.

"This is brave talking," he at length grumbled; "but, to my judgment, too

lawyer-like, for a straightforward, fair-weather and foul-weather hunter."

"I claim to be no better than a trapper," the other meekly answered.

"Hunter or trapper—there is little difference. I have come, old man, into these districts, because I found the law sitting too tight upon me, and am not overfond of neighbors who can't settle a dispute without troubling a justice and twelve men; but I didn't come to be robbed of my plunder, and then to say thank'ee to the man who did it!"

"He who ventures far into the prairies must abide by the ways of its owners."

"Owners!" echoed the squatter. "I am as rightful an owner of the land I stand on as any Governor of the States! Can you tell me, stranger, where the law or the reason is to be found which says that one man shall have a section, or a town, or perhaps a county to his use, and another have to beg for earth to make his grave in? This is not nature, and I deny that it is law! that is, your legal law."

"I cannot say that you are wrong," returned the trapper, whose opinions on this important topic, though drawn from very different premises, were in singular accordance with those of his companion, "and I have often thought and said as much, when and where I have believed my voice could be heard. But your beasts are stolen by them who claim to be masters of all they find in the deserts."

"They had better not dispute that matter with a man who knows better," said the other, in a portentous voice, though it seemed deep and sluggish as he who spoke. "I call myself a fair trader, and one who gives to his chaps as good as he receives. You saw the Indians?"

"I did—they held me a prisoner while they stole into your camp."

"It would have been more like a white man and a Christian to let me have known as much in better season," retorted Ishmael, casting another ominous, sidelong glance at the trapper, as if still meditating evil. "I am not much given to call every man I fall in with cousin, but color should be something when Christians meet in such a place as this. But what is done is

done, and cannot be mended by words. Come out of your ambush, boys; here is no one but the old man; he has eaten of my bread and should be our friend, though there is such good reason to suspect him of harboring with our enemies."

The trapper made no reply to the harsh suspicion which the other did not scruple to utter without the smallest delicacy, notwithstanding the explanations and denials to which he had just listened. The summons of the unnurtured squatter brought an immediate accession to their party. Four or five of his sons made their appearance from beneath as many covers, where they had been posted, under the impression that the figures they had seen, on the swell of the prairie, were a part of the Sioux band. As each man approached and dropped his rifle into the hollow of his arm, he cast an indolent but inquiring glance at the stranger, though none of them expressed the least curiosity to know whence he had come or why he was there. This forbearance, however, proceeded only in part from the sluggishness of their common temper; for long and frequent experience in scenes of a similar character had taught them the virtue of discretion. The trapper endured their sullen scrutiny with the steadiness of one as practiced as themselves, and with the entire composure of innocence. Content with the momentary examination he had made, the eldest of the group, who was in truth the delinquent sentinel by whose remissness the wily Mahtoree had so well profited, turned toward his father, and said, bluntly:

"If this man is all that is left of the party I saw on the upland yonder, we haven't altogether thrown away our ammunition."

"Asa, you are right," said the father, turning suddenly on the trapper, a lost idea being recalled by the hint of his son—"How is it, stranger? there were three of you just now, or there is no virtue in moonlight."

"If you had seen the Tetons racing across the prairies, like so many black-looking evil ones, on the heels of your cattle, my friend, it would have been an

easy matter to have fancied them a thousand."

"Ay, for a town-bred boy or a skeary woman; though, for that matter, there is old Esther; she has no more fear of a red-skin than of a sucking cub or of a wolf-pup. I'll warrant ye, had your thievish devils made their push by the light of the sun, the good woman would have been smartly at work among them, and the Sioux would have found she was not given to part with her cheese and her butter without a price. But there'll come a time, stranger, right soon, when justice will have its dues, and that, too, without the help of what is called the law. We ar' of a slow breed, it may be said, and it is often said of us; but slow is sure; and there ar' few men living who can say they ever struck a blow that they did not get one as hard in return from Ishmael Bush."

"Then has Ishmael Bush followed the instinct of the beasts, rather than the principle which ought to belong to his kind," returned the stubborn trapper. "I have struck many a blow myself, but never have I felt the same ease of mind that of right belongs to a man who follows his reason, after slaying even a fawn when there was no call for his meat or hide, as I have felt at leaving a Mingo unburied in the woods, when following the trade of open and honest warfare."

"What! you have been a soldier, have you, trapper? I made a forage or two among the Cherokees when I was a lad, myself, and I followed Mad Anthony,* one season, through the beeches; but there was altogether too much tattooing and regulating among his troops for me; so I left him, without calling on the paymaster to settle my arrearages. Though, as Esther afterward boasted, she had made such use of the pay-ticket that the States gained no great sum by the oversight.

* Anthony Wayne, a Pennsylvanian, distinguished in the war of the Revolution, and subsequently against the Indians of the West, for his daring as a general, by which he gained from his followers the title of Mad Anthony. General Wayne was the son of the person mentioned in the life of West as commanding the regiment which excited his military ardor.

You have heard of such a man as Mad Anthony, if you tarried long among the soldiers."

"I fou't my last battle, as I hope, under his orders," returned the trapper, a gleam of sunshine shooting from his dim eyes, as if the event was recollected with pleasure, and then a sudden shade of sorrow succeeding, as though he felt a secret admonition against dwelling on the violent scenes in which he had so often been an actor. "I was passing from the States on the sea-shore into these far regions, when I crossed the trail of his army, and I fell in, on his rear, just as a looker-on; but when they got to blows, the crack of my rifle was heard among the rest, though, to my shame it may be said, I never knew the right of the quarrel, as well as a man of three-score and ten should know, the reason of his acts afore he takes mortal life, which is a gift he never can return!"

"Come, stranger," said the emigrant, his rugged nature a good deal softened when he found that they had fought on the same side in the wild warfare of the West, "it is of small account what may be the ground-work of the disturbance, when it's a Christian ag'in a savage. We shall hear more of this horse-stealing to-morrow; to-night we can do no wiser or safer thing than to sleep."

So saying, Ishmael deliberately led the way back toward his rifled encampment, and ushered the man, whose life a few minutes before had been in real jeopardy from his resentment, into the presence of his family. Here, with a very few words of explanation, mingled with scarce but ominous denunciations against the plunderers, he made his wife acquainted with the state of things on the prairie, and announced his own determination to compensate himself for his broken rest by devoting the remainder of the night to sleep.

The trapper gave his ready assent to the measure, and adjusted his gaunt form on the pile of brush that was offered him, with as much composure as a sovereign could resign himself to sleep in the security of his capital, and surrounded by his

armed protectors. The old man did not close his eyes, however, until he had assured himself that Ellen Wade was among the females of the family, and that her relation, or lover, which ever he might be, had observed the caution of keeping himself out of view; after which he slept, though with the peculiar watchfulness of one long accustomed to vigilance, even in the hours of deepest night.

CHAPTER VI.

"He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd,
As it were too peregrinate, as I may call it."

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE Anglo-American is apt to boast, and not without reason, that his nation may claim a descent more truly honorable than that of any other people whose history is to be credited. Whatever might have been the weaknesses of the original colonists, their virtues have rarely been disputed. If they were superstitious, they were sincerely pious, and consequently honest. The descendants of these simple and single-minded provincials have been content to reject the ordinary and artificial means by which honors have been perpetuated in families, and have substituted a standard which brings the individual himself to the ordeal of the public estimation, paying as little deference as may be to those who have gone before him. This forbearance, self-denial, or common-sense, or by whatever term it may be thought proper to distinguish the measure, has subjected the nation to the imputation of having an ignoble origin. Were it worth the inquiry, it would be found that more than a just proportion of the renowned names of the mother-country are, at this hour, to be found in her *ci-devant* colonies; and it is a fact well known to the few who have wasted sufficient time to become the masters of so unimportant a subject, that the direct descendants of many a failing line, which the policy of England has seen fit to sustain by collateral supporters, are now discharging the simple duties of citizens in

the bosom of this republic. The hive has remained stationary, and they who flutter around the venerable straw are wont to claim the empty distinction of antiquity, regardless alike of the frailty of their tenement, and of the enjoyments of the numerous and vigorous swarms that are culling the fresher sweets of a virgin world. But, as this is a subject which belongs rather to the politician and historian than to the humble narrator of the home-bred incidents we are about to reveal, we must confine our reflections to such matters as have an immediate relation to the subject of the tale.

Although the citizen of the United States may claim so just an ancestry, he is far from being exempt from the penalties of his fallen race. Like causes are well known to produce like effects. That tribute, which it would seem nations must ever pay, by way of a weary probation, around the shrine of Ceres, before they can be indulged in her fullest favors, is in some measure exacted, in America, from the descendant instead of the ancestor. The march of civilization with us has a strong analogy to that of all coming events, which are known to "cast their shadows before." The gradations of society, from that state which is called refined to that which approaches as near barbarity as connection with an intelligent people will readily allow, are to be traced from the bosom of the States, where wealth, luxury, and the arts are beginning to seat themselves, to those distant and ever-receding borders which mark the skirts and announce the approach of the nation, as moving mists precede the signs of the day.

Here, and here only, is to be found that widely spread though far from numerous class which may be at all likened to those who have paved the way for the intellectual progress of nations in the Old World. The resemblance between the American borderer and his European prototype is singular, though not always uniform. Both might be called without restraint—the one being above, the other beyond the reach of the law—brave, because they were inured to danger—proud, because they were independent—and vindictive, because

each was the avenger of his own wrongs. It would be unjust to the borderer to pursue the parrallel much further. He is irreligious, because he has inherited the knowledge that religion does not exist in forms, and his reason rejects mockery. He is not a knight, because he has not the power to bestow distinction; and he has not the power, because he is the offspring and not the parent of a system. In what manner these several qualities are exhibited, in some of the most strongly marked of the latter class, will be seen in the course of the ensuing narrative.

Ishmael Bush had passed the whole of a life of more than fifty years on the skirts of society. He boasted that he had never dwelt where he might not safely fell every tree he could view from his own threshold; that the law had rarely been known to enter his clearing; and that his ears had never willingly admitted the sound of a church-bell. His exertions seldom exceeded his wants, which were peculiar to his class, and rarely failed of being supplied. He had no respect for any learning, except that of the leech; because he was ignorant of the application of any other intelligence than such as met the senses. His deference to this particular branch of science had induced him to listen to the application of a medical man, whose thirst for natural history had led him to the desire of profiting by the migratory propensities of the squatter. This gentleman he had cordially received into his family, or rather under his protection, and they had journeyed together thus far through the prairies in perfect harmony; Ishmael often felicitating his wife on the possession of a companion who would be so serviceable in their new abode, wherever it might chance to be, until the family were thoroughly "acclimated." The pursuits of the naturalist frequently led him, however, for days at a time, from the direct line of the route of the squatter, who rarely seemed to have any other guide than the sun. Most men would have deemed themselves fortunate to have been absent on the perilous occasion of the Sioux inroad, as was Obed Bat (or, as he was fond of hearing himself called, Bat-

tus), M.D., and fellow of several cisatlantic learned societies—the adventurous gentleman in question.

Although the sluggish nature of Ishmael was not actually awakened, it was sorely pricked by the liberties which had just been taken with his property. He slept, however, for it was the hour he had allotted to that refreshment, and because he knew how impotent any exertions to recover his effects must prove in the darkness of midnight. He also knew the danger of his present position too well to hazard what was left in pursuit of that which was lost. Much as the inhabitants of the prairie were known to love horses, their attachment to many other articles, still in the possession of the travelers, was equally well understood. It was a common artifice to scatter the herds, and to profit by the confusion. But Mahtoree had, as it would seem, in this particular, undervalued the acuteness of the man he had assailed. The phlegm with which the squatter learned his loss has already been seen; and it now remains to exhibit the results of his more matured determinations.

Though the encampment contained many an eye that was long unclosed, and many an ear that listened greedily to catch the faintest evidence of any new alarm, it lay in deep quiet during the remainder of the night. Silence and fatigue finally performed their accustomed offices, and before morning all but the sentinels were again buried in sleep. How well these indolent watchers discharged their duties after the assault has never been known, inasmuch as nothing occurred to confirm or to disprove their subsequent vigilance.

Just as day, however, began to dawn, and a gray light was falling from the heavens on the dusky objects of the plain, the half-startled, anxious, and yet blooming countenance of Ellen Wade was reared above the confused mass of children among whom she had clustered on her stolen return to camp. Arising warily, she stepped lightly across the recumbent bodies, and proceeded with the same caution to the utmost limits of the defenses

of Ishmael. Here she listened, as if doubting the propriety of venturing further. The pause was only momentary, however; and long before the drowsy eyes of the sentinel, who overlooked the spot where she stood, had time to catch a glimpse of her active form, it had glided along the bottom, and stood on the summit of the nearest eminence.

Ellen now listened intently, anxious to catch some other sound than the breathings of the morning air, which faintly rustled the herbage at her feet. She was about to turn in disappointment from the inquiry, when the tread of human feet making their way through the matted grass met her ear. Springing eagerly forward, she soon beheld the outlines of a figure advancing up the eminence, on the side opposite to the camp. She had already uttered the name of Paul, and was beginning to speak in the hurried and eager voice with which female affection is apt to greet a friend, when, drawing back, the disappointed girl closed her salutation by coldly adding:

"I did not expect, doctor, to meet you at this unusual hour."

"All hours and all seasons are alike, my good Ellen, to the genuine lover of Nature," returned a small, slightly made, but exceedingly active man, dressed in an odd mixture of cloth and skins, a little past the middle age, and who advanced directly to her side, with the familiarity of an old acquaintance; "and he who does not know how to find things to admire by this gray light, is ignorant of a large portion of the blessings he enjoys."

"Very true," said Ellen, suddenly recollecting the necessity of accounting for her own appearance abroad at that unseasonable hour; "I know many who think the earth has a pleasanter look in the night than when seen by the brightest sunshine."

"Ah! Their organs of sight must be too convex! But the man who wishes to study the active habits of the feline race, or the variety of the *albinos*, must indeed be stirring at this hour. I dare say there are men who prefer even looking at objects by twilight, for the simple reason that

they see better at that time of the day."

"And is this the cause why you are so much abroad in the night?"

"I am abroad at night, my good girl, because the earth in its diurnal revolutions leaves the light of the sun but half the time on any given meridian, and because what I have to do cannot be performed in twelve or fifteen consecutive hours. Now have I been off two days from the family in search of a plant that is known to exist on the tributaries of La Platte, without seeing even a blade of grass that is not already enumerated and classed."

"You have been unfortunate, doctor, but——"

"Unfortunate!" echoed the little man, sidling nigher to his companion, and producing his tablets with an air in which exultation struggled strangely with an affectation of self-abasement. "No, no, Ellen; I am anything but unfortunate! Unless, indeed, a man may be so called whose fortune is made, whose fame may be said to be established forever, whose name will go down to posterity with that of Buffon—Buffon! a mere compiler; one who flourishes on the foundation of other men's labors. No; *pari passu* with Solander, who bought his knowledge with pain and privations."

"Have you discovered a mine, Dr. Bat?"

"More than a mine; a treasure coined, and fit for instant use, girl. Listen! I was making the angle necessary to intersect the line of your uncle's march, after my fruitless search, when I heard sounds like the explosion produced by firearms——"

"Yes," exclaimed Ellen eagerly, "we had an alarm——"

"And thought I was lost," continued the man of science, too much bent on his own ideas to understand her interruption. "Little danger of that! I made my own base, knew the length of the perpendicular by calculation, and to draw the hypothenuse had nothing to do but to work my angle. I supposed the guns were fired for my benefit, and changed my course for the sounds—not that I

think the senses more accurate, or even as accurate as a mathematical calculation, but I feared that some of the children might need my services."

"They are all happily——"

"Listen," interrupted the other, already forgetting his affected anxiety for his patients, in the greater importance of the present subject. "I had crossed a large tract of prairie—for sound is conveyed far where there is little obstruction—when I heard the trampling of feet, as if bisons were beating the earth. Then I caught a distant view of a herd of quadrupeds, rushing up and down the swells—animals which would have still remained unknown and undescribed, had it not been for a most felicitous accident! One, and he a noble specimen of the whole, was running a little apart from the rest. The herd made an inclination in my direction, in which the solitary animal coincided, and this brought him within fifty yards of the spot where I stood. I profited by the opportunity, and, by the aid of steel and taper, I wrote his description on the spot. I would have given a thousand dollars, Ellen, for a single shot from the rifle of one of the boys!"

"You carry a pistol, doctor, why didn't you use it?" said the half-inattentive girl, anxiously examining the prairie, but still lingering where she stood, quite willing to be detained.

"Ay, but it carries nothing but the most minute particles of lead, adapted to the destruction of the larger insects and reptiles. No, I did better than to attempt waging a war in which I could not be the victor. I recorded the event; noting each particular with the precision necessary to science. You shall hear, Ellen, for you are a good and improving girl; and by retaining what you learn in this way may be yet of great service to learning, should any accident occur to me. Indeed, my worthy Ellen, mine is a pursuit which has its dangers as well as that of the warrior. This very night," he continued, glancing his eyes behind him, "this awful night, has the principle of life itself been in great danger of extinction!"

"By what?"

"By the monster I have discovered. It approached me often, and, ever as I receded, it continued to advance. I believe nothing but the little lamp I carried was my protector. I kept it between us while I wrote, making it serve the double purpose of luminary and shield. But you shall hear the character of the beast, and you may then judge of the risks we promoters of science run in behalf of mankind."

The naturalist raised his tablets to the heavens, and disposed himself to read as well as he could by the dim light they yet shed upon the plain, premising with saying:

"Listen girl, and you shall hear with what a treasure it has been my happy lot to enrich the pages of natural history!"

"Is it then a creature of your forming?" said Ellen, turning away from her fruitless examination, with a sudden lighting of her sprightly blue eyes, that showed she knew how to play with the foible of her learned companion.

"Is the power to give life to inanimate matter the gift of man? I would it were! You would speedily see an *Historia Naturalis Americana* that would put the sneering imitators of the Frenchman, De Buffon, to shame! A great improvement might be made in the formation of all quadrupeds; especially those in which velocity is a virtue. Two of the inferior limbs should be on the principle of the lever; wheels perhaps as they are now formed; though I have not yet determined whether the improvement might better be applied to the anterior or posterior members, inasmuch as I am yet to learn whether dragging or shoving requires the greatest muscular exertion. A natural exudation of the animal might assist in overcoming the friction, and a powerful momentum be obtained. But all this is hopeless—at least for the present," he added, raising his tablets again to the light, and reading aloud: "October 6, 1805, that's merely the date, which I daresay you know better than I—mem. *Quadruped*; seen by the star-light, and by the aid of a pocket-lamp, in the prairies of North America—see journal for latitude and meridian.

Genus—unknown; therefore named after the discoverer, and from the happy coincidence of having been seen in the evening—*Vespertilio horribilis Americanus*. *Dimensions* (by estimation)—*Greatest length*, eleven feet; *height*, six feet; *head*, erect; *nostrils*, expansive; *eyes*, expressive and fierce; *teeth*, serrated and abundant; *tail*, horizontal, waving, and slightly feline; *feet*, large and hairy; *talons*, long, curved, dangerous; *ears*, inconspicuous; *horns*, elongated, diverging, and formidable; *color*, plumbeous-ashy, with fiery spots; *voice*, sonorous, martial and appalling; *habits*, gregarious, carnivorous, fierce and fearless. There," exclaimed Obed, when he had ended this sententious but comprehensive description, "there is an animal which will be likely to dispute with the lion his title to be called the king of the beasts!"

"I know not the meaning of all you have said, Dr. Battius," returned the quick-witted girl, who understood the weakness of the philosopher, and often indulged him with a title he loved so well to hear; "but I shall think it dangerous to venture far from the camp if such monsters are prowling over the prairies."

"You may well call it prowling," returned the naturalist, nestling closer to her side, and dropping his voice to such low and undignified tones of confidence as conveyed a meaning still more pointed than he had intended. "I have never before experienced such a trial of the nervous system; there was a moment, I acknowledge, when the *fortiter in re* faltered before so terrible an enemy; but the love of natural science bore me up, and brought me off in triumph."

"You speak a language so different from what we use in Tennessee," said Ellen, struggling to conceal her laughter, "that I hardly know whether I understand your meaning. If I am right, you wish to say you were chicken-hearted."

"An absurd simile drawn from the ignorance of the formation of the bibeled. The heart of a chicken has a just proportion to its other organs, and the domestic fowl is, in a state of nature, a gallant bird. Ellen," he added, with a

countenance so solemn as to produce an impression on the attentive girl, "I was pursued, hunted, and in a danger that I scorn to dwell on—what's that!"

Ellen started, for the earnestness and simple sincerity of her companion's manner had produced a certain degree of credulity even on her buoyant mind. Looking in the direction indicated by the doctor, she beheld, in fact, a beast coursing over the prairie, and making a straight and rapid approach to the spot they occupied. The day was not yet sufficiently advanced to enable her to distinguish its form and character, though enough was discernible to induce her to imagine it a fierce and savage animal.

"It comes! it comes!" exclaimed the doctor, fumbling, by a sort of instinct, for his tablets, while he fairly tottered on his feet under the powerful efforts he made to maintain his ground. "Now, Ellen, has fortune given me an opportunity to correct the errors made by starlight—hold—ashy—plumbeous—no ears—horns, excessive." His voice and hands were both arrested by a roar, or rather a shriek, from the beast, that was sufficiently terrific to appal even a stouter heart than that of the naturalist. The cries of the animal passed over the prairie in strange cadences, and then succeeded a deep and solemn silence that was only broken by an uncontrolled fit of merriment from the more musical voice of Ellen Wade. In the meantime the naturalist stood like a statue of amazement, permitting a well-grown ass, against whose approach he no longer offered his boasted shield of light, to smell about his person, without comment or hindrance.

"It is your own ass," cried Ellen, the instant she found breath for words; "your own patient, hard-working hack!"

The doctor rolled his eyes from the beast to the speaker, and from the speaker to the beast; but gave no audible expression of his wonder.

"Do you refuse to know an animal that has labored so long in your service?" continued the laughing girl. "A beast that I have heard you say, a thousand times, has served you well, and whom you loved like a brother?"

"*Asinus domesticus*!" ejaculated the doctor, drawing his breath like one who had been near suffocation. "There is no doubt of the genus; and I will always maintain that the animal is not of the species *Equus*. This is undeniably *Asinus* himself, Ellen Wade; but this is not the *Vespertilio horribilis* of the prairie! Very different animals, I can assure you, young woman, and very differently characterized in every important particular. That, carnivorous," he continued, glancing his eye at the open page of his tablets; "this, granivorous; *habits*, fierce, dangerous; *habits*, patient, abstemious; *ears*, inconspicuous; *ears*, elongated; *horns*, diverging, etc.; *horns*, none!"

He was interrupted by another burst of merriment from Ellen, which served in some measure to recall him to his recollection.

"The image of the *Vespertilio* was on the retina," the astounded inquirer into the secrets of Nature observed, in a manner that seemed a little apologetic, "and I was silly enough to mistake my own faithful beast for the monster. Though even now I greatly marvel to see this animal running at large."

Ellen then proceeded to explain the history of the attack and its results. She described, with an accuracy that might have raised suspicions of her own movements in the mind of one less simple than her auditor, the manner in which the beasts burst out of the encampment, and the headlong speed with which they had dispersed themselves over the open plain. Although she forbore to say as much in terms, she so managed as to present before the eyes of her listener the strong probability of having mistaken the frightened drove for savage beasts, and then terminated her account by a lamentation for their loss, and some very natural remarks on the helpless condition in which it had left the family. The naturalist listened in silent wonder, neither interrupting her narrative, nor suffering a single exclamation of surprise to escape him. The keen-eyed girl, however, saw that, as she proceeded, the important leaf was torn from the tablets, in a manner

which showed that their owner had got rid of his delusion at the same instant. From that moment the world has heard, no more of the *Vespertilio horribilis Americanus*, and the natural sciences have irretrievably lost an important link in that great animated chain which is said to connect earth and heaven, and in which man is thought to be so familiarly complicated with the monkey.

When Dr. Bat was put in full possession of all the circumstances of the inroad, his concern immediately took a different direction. He had left sundry folios, and certain boxes well stored with botanical specimens and defunct animals, under the good keeping of Ishmael, and it immediately struck his acute mind that marauders as subtle as the Sioux would never neglect the opportunity to despoil him of these treasures. Nothing that Ellen could say to the contrary served to appease his apprehensions, and consequently they separated—he to relieve his doubts and fears together, and she to glide, as swiftly and silently as she had just before passed it, into the still and solitary tent.

CHAPTER VII.

What! fifty of my followers, at a clap!"

—KING LEAR.

THE day had now fairly opened on the seemingly interminable waste of the prairie. The entrance of Obed at such a moment into the camp, accompanied as it was by vociferous lamentations over his anticipated loss, did not fail to rouse the drowsy family of the squatter. Ishmael and his sons, together with the forbidding-looking brother of his wife, were all speedily afoot, and, then, as the sun began to shed his light on the place, they became gradually apprised of the extent of their loss.

Ishmael looked round upon the motionless and heavily-loaded vehicles, with his teeth firmly compressed, cast a glance at the amazed and helpless group of children, which clustered around their sullen but desponding mother, and walked out upon

the open land, as if he found the air of the encampment too confined. He was followed by several of the men, who were attentive observers, watching the dark expression of his eyes as the index of their own future movements. The whole proceeded in profound and moody silence to the summit of the nearest swell, whence they could command an almost boundless view of the naked plains. Here nothing was visible but a solitary buffalo, that gleaned a meager subsistence from the decaying herbage, at no great distance, and the ass of the physician, who profited by his freedom to enjoy a meal richer than common.

"Yonder is one of the creatures left by the villains to mock us," said Ishmael, glancing his eye toward the latter, "and that the meanest of the stock. This is a hard country to make a crop in, boys; and yet food must be found to fill many hungry mouths!"

"The rifle is better than the hoe in such a place as this," returned the eldest of his sons, kicking the hard and thirsty soil on which he stood with an air of contempt. "It is good for such as they who make their dinner better on beggars' beans than hominy. A crow would shed tears if obliged by its errand to fly across the district."

"What say you, trapper?" returned the father, showing the slight impression his powerful heel had made on the compact earth, and laughing with frightful ferocity. "Is this the quality of land a man would choose who never troubles the county clerk with title-deeds?"

"There is richer soil in the bottoms," returned the old man calmly, "and you have passed millions of acres to get to this dreary spot, where he who loves to till the 'arth might have received bushels in return for pints, and that, too, at the cost of no very grievous labor. If you have come in search of land, you have journeyed hundreds of miles too far, or as many leagues too little."

"There is, then, a better choice toward the other ocean?" demanded the squatter, pointing in the direction of the Pacific.

"There is, and I have seen it all," was the answer of the other, who dropped his rifle to the earth, and stood leaning on its barrel, like one who recalled the scenes he had witnessed with melancholy pleasure. "I have seen the waters of the two seas! On one of them I was born, and raised to be a lad like yonder tumbling boy. America has grown, my men, since the days of my youth, to be a country larger than I once had thought the world itself to be. Near seventy years I dwelt in York, province and State together. You've been in York, 'tis like?"

"Not I—not I; I never visited the towns; but often have heard the place you speak of named. 'Tis a wide clearing there, I reckon."

"Too wide! too wide! They scourge the very 'arth with their axes. Such hills and hunting-grounds as I have seen stripped of the gifts of the Lord, without remorse or shame! I tarried till the mouths of my hounds were deafened by the blows of the chopper, and then I came West in search of quiet. It was a grievous journey that I made; a grievous toil to pass through falling timber, and to breathe the thick air of smoky clearings week after week, as I did! 'Tis a far country, too, that State of York, from this!"

"It lies ag'in the outer edge of old Kentucky, I reckon; though what the distance may be I never knew."

"A gull would have to fan a thousand miles of air to find the Eastern sea. And yet it is no mighty reach to hunt across, when shade and game are plenty! The time has been when I followed the deer in the mountains of the Delaware and Hudson, and took the beaver on the streams of the upper lakes, in the same season; but my eye was quick and certain at that day, and my limbs were like the legs of a moose! The dam of Hector," dropping his look kindly to the aged hound that crouched at his feet, "was then a pup, and apt to open on the game the moment she struck the scent. She gave me a deal of trouble, that slut, she did!"

"Your hound is old, stranger, and a rap on the head would prove a mercy to the beast."

"The dog is like his master," returned the trapper, without appearing to heed the brutal advice the other gave, "and will number his days when his work among the game is over, and not before. To my eye things seem ordered to meet each other in this creation. 'Tis not the swiftest running deer that always throws off the hounds, nor the biggest arm that holds the truest rifle. Look around you, men; what will the Yankee choppers say when they have cut their path from the Eastern to the Western waters, and find that a hand, which can lay the 'arth bare at a blow, has been here and swept the country, in very mockery of their wickedness? They will turn on their tracks like a fox that doubles, and then the rank smell of their own footsteps will show them the madness of their waste. Howsomever, these are thoughts that are more likely to rise in him who has seen the folly of eighty seasons, than to teach wisdom to men still bent on the pleasures of their kind! You have need, yet, of a stirring time, if you think to escape the craft and hatred of the burnt-wood Indians. They claim to be the lawful owners of this country, and seldom leave a white more than the skin he boasts of when once they get the power, as they always have the will, to do him harm."

"Old man," said Ishmael sternly, "to which people do you belong? You have the color and speech of a Christian, while it seems that your heart is with the redskins."

"To me there is little difference in nations. The people I loved most are scattered as the sands of the dry river-beds fly before the fall hurricanes, and life is too short to make use and custom with strangers as one can do with such as he has dwelt among for years. Still I am a man without the cross of Indian blood; and what is due from a warrior to his nation is owing by me to the people of the States; though little need have they, with their militia and their armed boats, of help from a single arm of four-score."

"Since you own your kin, I may ask a simple question. Where are the Sioux who have stolen my cattle?"

"Where is the herd of buffaloes which was chased by the panther across this plain no later than the morning of yesterday! It is as hard——"

"Friend," said Dr. Battius, who had hitherto been an attentive listener, but who now felt a sudden impulse to mingle in the discourse, "I am grieved when I find a venator or hunter of your experience and observation following the current of vulgar error. The animal you describe is in truth a species of the *Bos ferus* (or *Bos sylvestris*, as he has been happily called by the poets); but, though of close affinity, it is altogether distinct from the common *bubulus*. *Bison* is the better word, and I would suggest the necessity of adopting it in the future when you shall have occasion to allude to the species."

"Bison or buffalo, it makes but little matter. The creature is the same, call it by what name you will, and——"

"Pardon me, venerable venator; as classification is the very soul of natural sciences, the animal or vegetable must of necessity be characterized by the peculiarities of its species, which is always indicated by the name——"

"Friend," said the trapper, a little positively, "would the tail of a beaver make the worse dinner for calling it a mink; or could you eat of the wolf with relish because some bookish man had given it the name of venison?"

As these questions were put with no little earnestness and some spirit, there was every probability that a hot discussion would have succeeded between two men, of whom one was so purely practical and the other so much given to theory, had not Ishmael seen fit to terminate the dispute by bringing into view a subject that was much more important to his own immediate interests.

"Beavers' tails and minks' flesh may do to talk about before a maple fire and a quiet hearth," interrupted the squatter, without the smallest deference to the interested feelings of the disputants; "but something more than foreign words, or words of any sort, is now needed. Tell me trapper, where are your Sioux skulking?"

"It would be as easy to tell you the colors of the hawk that is floating beneath yonder white cloud! When a red-skin strikes his blow, he is not apt to wait until he is paid for the evil deed in lead."

"Will the beggarly savages believe they have enough when they find themselves masters of all the stock?"

"Natur' is much the same, let it be covered by what skin it may. Do you ever find your longings after riches less when you have made a good crop than before you were master of a kernel of corn? If you do, you differ from what the experience of a long life tells me is the common cravings of man."

"Speak plainly, old stranger," said the squatter, striking the butt of his rifle heavily on the earth, his dull capacity finding no pleasure in a discourse that was conducted in so obscure allusions; "I have asked a simple question, and one I know well that you can answer."

"You are right, you are right. I can answer, for I have too often seen the disposition of my kind to mistake it, when evil is stirring. When the Sioux have gathered in the beasts, and have made sure that you are not upon their heels, they will be back nibbling like hungry wolves to take the bait they have left; or, it may be, they'll show the temper of the great bears that are found at the falls of the Long River, and strike at once with the paw, without stopping to nose their prey."

"You have then seen the animals you mention!" exclaimed Dr. Battius, who had now been thrown out of the conversation quite as long as his impatience could well brook, and who approached the subject with his tablets ready opened, as a book of reference. "Can you tell me if what you encountered was of the species *Ursus horribilis*—with the ears rounded—front, arquated—eyes, destitute of the remarkable supplemental lid—with six incisors, one false, and four perfect molars?"

"Trapper, go on, for we are engaged in reasonable discourse," interrupted Ishmael. "You believe we shall see more of the robbers?"

"Nay, nay; I do not call them robbers, for it is the usage of their people, and what may be called the prairie law."

"I have come five hundred miles to find a place where no man can ding the words of the law in my ears," said Ishmael, fiercely, "and I am not in a humor to stand quietly at a bar while a red-skin sits in judgment. I tell you, trapper, if another Sioux is seen prowling around my camp, wherever it may be, he shall feel the contents of old Kentuck," slapping his rifle in a manner that could not be easily misconstrued, "though he wore the medal of Washington* himself. I call the man a robber who takes that which is not his own."

"The Teton, and the Pawnee, and the Konza, and men of a dozen other tribes claim to own these naked fields."

"Natur' gives them the lie in their teeth. The air, the water, and the ground are free gifts to man, and no one has the power to portion them out in parcels. Man must drink, and breathe, and walk—and therefore each has a right to his share of 'arth. Why do not the surveyors of the States set their compasses and run their lines over our heads as well as beneath our feet? Why do they not cover their shining sheep-skins with big words, giving to the landholder, or perhaps he should be called airholder, so many rods of heaven, with the use of such a star for a boundary-mark, and such a cloud to turn a mill?"

As the squatter uttered his wild conceit, he laughed from the very bottom of his chest in scorn. The deriding but frightful merriment passed from the mouth of one of his ponderous sons to that of the other until it had made the circuit of the whole family.

"Come, trapper," continued Ishmael, in a tone of better humor, like a man who feels that he has triumphed, "neither of us, I reckon, has ever had much to do with title-deeds, or county clerks, or blazed trees, therefore we will not waste words

* The American Government creates chiefs among the Western tribes, and decorates them with silver medals bearing the impression of the different Presidents. That of Washington is the most prized.

on fooleries. You are a man that has tarried long in this clearing; and now I ask your opinion, face to face, without fear or favor, if you had the lead in my business, what would you do?"

The old man hesitated, and seemed to give the required advice with deep reluctance. As every eye, however, was fastened on him, and whichever way he turned his face he encountered a look riveted on the lineaments of his own working countenance, he answered in a low, melancholy tone:

"I have seen too much mortal blood poured out in empty quarrels to wish even to hear an angry rifle again. Ten weary years have I sojourned alone on these naked plains, waiting for my hour, and not a blow have I struck ag'in an enemy more humanized than the grizzly bear."

"*Ursus horribilis*," muttered the doctor.

The speaker paused at the sound of the other's voice, but perceiving it was no more than a sort of mental ejaculation, he continued in the same strain:

"More humanized than the grizzly bear, or the panther of the Rocky Mountains, unless the beaver, which is a wise and knowing animal, may be so reckoned. What would I advise? Even the female buffalo will fight for her young!"

"It never, then, shall be said that Ishmael Bush has less kindness for his children than the bear for her cubs!"

"And yet this is but a naked spot for a dozen men to make head in, ag'in five hundred."

"Ay, it is so," returned the squatter, glancing his eye toward his humble camp; "but something might be done with the wagons and the cotton-wood."

The trapper shook his head incredulously, and pointed across the rolling plain in the direction of the west, as he answered:

"A rifle would send a bullet from these hills into your very sleeping cabins; nay, arrows from the thicket in your rear would keep you all burrowed, like so many prairie dogs; it wouldn't do, it wouldn't do. Three long miles from this spot is a place where, as I have often thought in passing across the desert, a stand might be made for days and weeks together, if there were

hearts and hands ready to engage in the bloody work."

Another low, deriding laugh passed among the young men, announcing, in a manner sufficiently intelligible, their readiness to undertake a task even more arduous. The squatter himself eagerly seized the hint which had been so reluctantly extorted from the trapper, who, by some singular process of reasoning, had evidently persuaded himself that it was his duty to be strictly neutral. A few direct and pertinent inquiries served to obtain the little additional information that was necessary, in order to make the contemplated movement; and then Ishmael, who was, on emergencies, as terrifically energetic as he was sluggish in common, set about effecting his object without delay.

Notwithstanding the industry and zeal of all engaged, the task was one of great labor and difficulty. The loaded vehicles were to be drawn by hand across a wide distance of plain, without track or guide of any sort, except that which the trapper had furnished by communicating his knowledge of the cardinal points of the compass. In accomplishing this object, the gigantic strength of the men was taxed to the utmost, nor were the females or the children spared a heavy proportion of the toil. While the sons distributed themselves about the heavily loaded wagons, and drew them by main strength up the neighboring swell, their mother and Ellen, surrounded by the amazed group of little ones, followed slowly in the rear, bending under the weight of such different articles as were suited to their several strengths.

Ishmael himself superintended and directed the whole, occasionally applying his colossal shoulder to some lagging vehicle until he saw that the chief difficulty, that of gaining the level of their intended route, was accomplished. Then he pointed out the required course, cautioning his sons to proceed in such a manner that they should not lose the advantage they had with so much labor obtained, and, beckoning to the brother of his wife, they returned together to the empty camp.

Throughout the whole of this movement, which occupied an hour of time, the trapper had stood apart, leaning on his rifle, with the aged hound slumbering at his feet, a silent but attentive observer of all that passed. Occasionally a smile lighted his hard, muscular, but wasted features like a gleam of sunshine flitting across a ragged ruin, and betrayed the momentary pleasure he found in witnessing from time to time the vast power the youths discovered. Then, as the train drew slowly up the ascent, a cloud of thought and sorrow threw all into the shade again, leaving the expression of his countenance in its usual state of quiet melancholy. As vehicle after vehicle left the place of the encampment, he noted the change with increasing attention; seldom failing to cast an inquiring look at the little neglected tent, which, with its proper wagon, still remained as before, solitary and apparently forgotten. The summons of Ishmael to his gloomy associate had, however, as it would now seem, this hitherto neglected portion of his effects for its object.

First casting a cautious and suspicious glance on every side of him, the squatter and his companion advanced to the little wagon, and caused it to enter within the folds of the cloth, much in the manner that it had been extricated the preceding evening. They both then disappeared behind the drapery, and many moments of suspense succeeded, during which the old man, secretly urged by a burning desire to know the meaning of so much mystery, insensibly drew nigh to the place, until he stood within a few yards of the proscribed spot. The agitation of the cloth betrayed the nature of the occupation of those whom it concealed, though their work was conducted in rigid silence. It would appear that long practice had made each of the two acquainted with his particular duty; for neither sign nor direction of any sort was necessary from Ishmael, in order to apprise his surly associate of the manner in which he was to proceed. In less time than has been consumed in relating it, the interior portion of the arrangement was completed, when the

men reappeared without the tent. Too busy with his occupation to heed the presence of the trapper, Ishmael began to release the folds of the cloth from the ground, and to dispose of them in such a manner around the vehicle as to form a sweeping train to the new form the little pavilion had now assumed. The arched roof trembled with the occasional movement of the light vehicle which, it was apparent, once more supported its secret burden. Just as the work was ended, the scowling eye of Ishmael's assistant caught a glimpse of the figure of the attentive observer of their movements. Dropping the shaft, which he had already lifted from the ground, preparatory to occupying the place that was usually filled by an animal less reasoning and perhaps less dangerous than himself, he bluntly exclaimed:

"I am a fool, as you often say. But look for yourself. If that man is not an enemy, I will disgrace father and mother, call myself an Indian, and go hunt with the Sioux!"

The cloud, as it is about to discharge the subtle lightning, is not more dark nor threatening than the look with which Ishmael greeted the intruder. He turned his head on every side of him, as if seeking some engine sufficiently terrible to annihilate the offending trapper at a blow; and then, possibly recollecting the further occasion he might have for his counsel, he forced himself to say, with an appearance of moderation that nearly choked him:

"Stranger, I did believe this prying into the concerns of others was the business of women in the towns and settlements, and not the manner in which men, who are used to live where each has room for himself, deal with the secrets of their neighbors. To what lawyer or sheriff do you calculate to sell your news?"

"I hold but little discourse, except with one, and then chiefly of my own affairs," returned the old man, without the least observable apprehension, and pointing imposingly upward; "a Judge and Judge of all. Little does he need knowledge from my hands, and but little will your wish to keep anything secret from him profit you, even in this desert."

The mounting tempers of his untutored listeners were rebuked by the simple, solemn manner of the trapper. Ishmael stood sullen and thoughtful, while his companion stole a furtive and involuntary glance at the placid sky, which spread so wide and blue above his head, as if he expected to see the Almighty eye itself beaming from the heavenly vault. But impressions of a serious character are seldom lasting on minds long indulged in forgetfulness. The hesitation of the squatter was consequently of short duration. The language, however, as well as the firm and collected air of the speaker, were the means of preventing much subsequent abuse, if not violence.

"It would be showing more of the kindness of a friend and comrade," Ishmael returned, in a tone sufficiently sullen to betray his humor, though it was no longer threatening, "had your shoulder been put to the wheel of one of yonder wagons, instead of edging itself in here, where none are wanted but such as are invited."

"I can put the little strength that is left me," returned the trapper, "to this, as well as to another of your loads."

"Do you take us for boys?" exclaimed Ishmael, laughing half in ferocity and half in derision, applying his powerful strength at the same time to the little vehicle, which rolled over the grass with as much seeming facility as if it were drawn by its usual team.

The trapper paused, and followed the departing wagon with his eye, marveling greatly as to the nature of its concealed contents, until it had also gained the summit of the eminence, and in its turn disappeared behind the swell of the land. Then he turned to gaze at the desolation of the scene around him. The absence of human forms would have scarce created a sensation in the bosom of one so long accustomed to solitude, had not the site of the deserted camp furnished such strong memorial of its recent visitors, and, as the old man was quick to detect, of their waste also. He cast his eye upward, with a shake of the head, at the vacant spot in the heavens which had so lately been filled by the branches of those trees

that now lay stripped of their verdure, worthless and deserted logs at his feet.

"Ay," he muttered to himself, "I might have know'd it! Often have I seen the same before; and yet I brought them to the spot myself, and have now sent them to the only neighborhood of their kind within many long leagues of the spot where I now stand. This is man's wish, and pride, and waste, and sinfulness! He tames the beasts of the field to feed his idle wants, and having robbed the brutes of their natural food, he teaches them to strip the 'arth of its trees to quiet their hunger."

A rustling in the low bushes which still grew, for some distance, along the swale that formed the thicket on which the camp of Ishmael had rested, caught his ear at the moment, and cut short the soliloquy. The habits of so many years spent in the wilderness caused the old man to bring his rifle to a poise, with something like the activity and promptitude of his youth; but, suddenly recovering his recollection, he dropped it into the hollow of his arm again, and resumed his air of melancholy resignation.

"Come forth, come forth!" he said aloud; "be ye bird or be ye beast, ye are safe from these old hands. I have eaten and I have drunk: why should I take life when my wants call for no sacrifice? It would not be long afore the birds will peck at eyes that shall not see them, and perhaps light on my very bones; for if things like these are only made to perish, why am I to expect to live forever? Come forth, come forth; you are safe from harm at these weak hands."

"Thank you for the good word, old trapper!" cried Paul Hover, springing actively forward from his place of concealment. "There was an air about you when you threw forward the muzzle of your piece, that I did not like; for it seemed to say that you were master of all the rest of the motions."

"You are right, you are right!" cried the trapper, laughing with inward self-complacency at the recollection of his former skill. "The day has been when few men knew the virtues of a long rifle,

like this I carry, better than myself, old and useless as I now seem. You are right, young man; and the time was when it was dangerous to move a leaf within earshot of my stand; or," he added, dropping his voice and looking serious, "for a red Mingo to show an eyeball from his ambushment. You have heard of the red Mingo?"

"I have heard of minks," said Paul, taking the old man by the arm, and gently urging him toward the thicket as he spoke; while at the same time he cast quick and uneasy glances behind him in order to make sure that he was not observed—"of your common black minks, but none of any other color."

"Lord! Lord!" continued the trapper, shaking his head, and still laughing in his deep but quiet manner; "the boy mistakes a brute for a man! Though a Mingo is little better than a beast; or, for that matter, he is worse when rum and opportunity are placed before his eyes. There was that accursed Huron from the upper lakes, that I knocked from his perch among the rocks in the hills, back of the Hori——"

His voice was lost in the thicket, into which he had suffered himself to be led by Paul while speaking, too much occupied by thoughts which dwelt on scenes and acts that had taken place half a century earlier in the history of the country, to offer the smallest resistance.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Now they are clapper-clawing one another; I'll go look on. That dissembling, abominable varlet, Diomed, has got that same scurvy, doting, foolish young knave in his helm."—TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

It is necessary, in order that the thread of the narrative should not be spun to a length which might fatigue the reader, that he should imagine a week to have intervened between the scene with which the preceding chapter closed and the events with which it is our intention to resume its relation in this. The season

was on the point of changing its character; the verdure of summer giving place more rapidly to the brown and party-colored livery of the fall.* The heavens were clothed in driving clouds, piled in vast masses one above the other, which whirled violently in the gusts; opening, occasionally, to admit transient glimpses of the bright and glorious sight of the heavens, dwelling in a magnificence by far too grand and durable to be disturbed by the fitful efforts of the lower world. Beneath, the wind swept across the wild and naked prairies with a violence that is seldom witnessed in any section of the continent less open. It would have been easy to have imagined, in the ages of fable, that the god of the winds had permitted his subordinate agents to escape from their den, and that they now rioted in wantonness across wastes where neither tree, nor work of man, nor mountain, nor obstacle of any sort, opposed itself to their gambols.

Though nakedness might, as usual, be given as the pervading character of the spot whither it is now necessary to transfer the scene of the tale, it was not entirely without the signs of human life. Amid the monotonous rolling of the prairie, a single naked and ragged rock arose on the margin of a little water-course which found its way, after winding a vast distance through the plains, into one of the numerous tributaries of the Father of Rivers. A swale of low land lay near the base of the eminence, and, as it was still fringed with a thicket of alders and sumach, it bore the signs of having once nurtured a feeble growth of wood. The trees themselves had been transferred, however, to the summit and crags of the neighboring rocks. On this elevation the signs of man, to which the allusion just made applies, were to be found.

Seen from beneath, there were visible a breastwork of logs and stones, intermingled in such a manner as to save all unnecessary labor, a few low roofs made of bark and boughs of trees, an occa-

*The Americans call the autumn the "fall," from the fall of the leaf.

sional barrier, constructed like the defenses on the summit, and placed on such points of the acclivity as were easier of approach than the general face of the eminence; and a little dwelling of cloth, perched on the apex of a small pyramid that shot up on one angle of the rock, the white covering of which glimmered from a distance like a spot of snow, or, to make the simile more suitable to the rest of the subject, like a spotless and carefully guarded standard, which was to be protected by the dearest blood of those who defended the citadel beneath. It is hardly necessary to add that this rude and characteristic fortress was the place where Ishmael Bush had taken refuge, after the robbery of his flocks and herds.

On the day to which the narrative is advanced, the squatter was standing near the base of the rocks, leaning on his rifle, and regarding the sterile soil that supported him with a look in which contempt and disappointment were strongly blended.

"'Tis time to change our natur's," he observed to the brother of his wife, who was rarely far from his elbow; "and to become ruminators, instead of people used to the fare of Christians and free men. I reckon, Abiram, you could glean a living among the grasshoppers; you ar' an active man, and might out-run the nimblest skipper of them all."

"The country will never do," returned the other, who relished but little the forced humor of his kinsman; "and it is well to remember that a lazy traveler makes a long journey."

"Would you have me draw a cart at my heels, across this desert for weeks—ay, months?" retorted Ishmael, who, like all of his class, could labor with incredible efforts on emergencies, but who too seldom exerted continued industry on any occasion to brook a proposal that offered so little repose. "It may do for your people, who live in settlements, to hasten on to their houses; but, thank Heaven! my farm is too big for its owner ever to want a resting-place."

"Since you like the plantation, then, you have only to make your crop."

"That is easier said than done, on this corner of the estate. I tell you, Abiram, there is need of moving, for more reasons than one. You know I'm a man that very seldom enters into a bargain, but who always fulfills his agreements better than your dealers in wordy contracts, written on rags of paper. If there's one mile, there ar' a hundred still needed to make up the distance for which you have my honor."

As he spoke, the squatter glanced his eye upward at the little tenement of cloth, which crowned the summit of his ragged fortress. The look was understood and answered by the other; and by some secret influence, which operated either through their interests or feelings, it served to re-establish that harmony between them which had just been threatened with something like a momentary breach.

"I know it and feel it in every bone of my body. But I remember the reason why I have set myself on this accursed journey too well to forget the distance between me and the end. Neither you nor I will ever be the better for what we have done, unless we thoroughly finish what is so well begun. Ay, that is the doctrine of the whole world, I judge; I heard a traveling preacher, who was skirting it down the Ohio, a time since, say if a man should live up to the faith for a hundred years, and then fell from his work a single day, he would find the settlement was to be made for the finishing blow that he had put to his job, and that all the bad, and none of the good, would come into the final account."

"And you believed the hungry hypocrite?"

"Who said that I believed it?" retorted Abiram, with a bullying look, that betrayed how much his fears had dwelt on the subject he affected to despise. "Is it believing to tell what a roguish—? And yet, Ishmael, the man might have been honest after all! He told us that the world was, in truth, no better than a desert, and there was but one hand that could lead the most learned man through all its crooked windings. Now, if this be

true of the whole, it may be true of a part."

"Abiram, out with your grievances like a man," interrupted the squatter, with a hoarse laugh. "You want to pray! But of what use will it be, according to your own doctrine, to serve God five minutes and the devil an hour? Harkee, friend; I'm not much of a husbandman, but this I know to my cost: that to make a right good crop, even on the richest bottom, there must be hard labor; and your snufflers liken the 'arth to a field of corn, and the men who live on it to its yield. Now I tell you, Abiram, that you are no better than a thistle or a mullein; yea, ye ar' a wood of too open a pore to be good even to burn."

The malign glance which shot from the scowling eye of Abiram announced the angry character of his feelings; but, as the furtive look quailed immediately before the unmoved, steady countenance of the squatter, it also betrayed how much the bolder spirit of the latter had obtained the mastery over his craven nature.

Content with his ascendancy, which was too apparent, and had been often exerted on similar occasions, to leave him in any doubt of its extent, Ishmael coolly continued the discourse, by adverting more directly to his future plans.

"You will own the justice of paying every one in kind," he said. "I have been robbed of my stock, and I have a scheme to make myself as good as before, by taking hoof for hoof; or, for that matter, when a man is put to the trouble of bargaining for both sides, he is a fool if he don't pay himself something in the way of commission."

As the squatter made this declaration, in a tone which was a little excited by the humor of the moment, four or five of his lounging sons, who had been leaning against the foot of the rock, came forward with the indolent step so common to the family.

"I have been calling Ellen Wade, who is on the rock keeping the lookout, to know if there is anything to be seen," observed the eldest of the young men; "and she shakes her head, for an answer.

Ellen is sparing of her words for a woman, and might be taught manners, at least, without spoiling her good looks."

Ishmael cast his eyes upward to the place where the offending but unconscious girl was holding her anxious watch. She was seated at the edge of the uppermost crag, by the side of the little tent, and at least two hundred feet above the level of the plain. Little else was to be distinguished, at that distance, but the outline of her form, her fair hair streaming in the gusts beyond her shoulders, and the steady and seemingly unchangeable look that she riveted on some remote point of the prairie.

"What is it, Nell?" cried Ishmael, lifting his powerful voice a little above the rushing of the element. "Have you got a glimpse of anything bigger than a burrowing barker?"

The lips of the attentive Ellen parted; she rose to the utmost height her small stature admitted, seeming still to regard the unknown object; but her voice, if she spoke at all, was not sufficiently loud to be heard amid the wind.

"It ar' a fact that the child sees something more uncommon than a buffalo or a prairie-dog!" continued Ishmael: "Why, Nell, girl, ar' ye deaf. Nell, I say—I hope it is an army of red-skins she has in her eye; for I should relish the chance to pay them for their kindness, under the favor of these logs and rocks!"

As the squatter accompanied his vaunt with corresponding gestures, and directed his eyes to the circle of his equally confident sons while speaking, he drew their gaze from Ellen to himself; but now, when they turned together to note the succeeding movements of their female sentinel, the place which had so lately been occupied by her form was vacant.

"As I am a sinner," exclaimed Asa, usually one of the most phlegmatic of the youths, "the girl is blown away by the wind!"

Something like a sensation was exhibited among them, which might have denoted that the influence of the laughing blue eyes, flaxen hair, and glowing cheeks of Ellen, had not been lost on the dull natures of the young men, and looks of

amazement, mingled slightly with concern, passed from one to the other as they gazed in dull wonder at the point of the naked rock.

"It might well be!" added another; "she sat on a slivered stone, and I have been thinking of telling her she was in danger for more than an hour."

"Is that a ribbon of the child, dangling from the corner of the hill below?" cried Ishmael; "ha! who is moving about the tent? Have I not told you all——"

"Ellen! 'tis Ellen!" interrupted the whole body of his sons in a breath, and at that instant she reappeared, to put an end to their different surmises, and to relieve more than one sluggish nature from its unwonted excitement. As Ellen issued from beneath the folds of the tent, she advanced with a light and fearless step to her former giddy stand, and pointed toward the prairie, appearing to speak in an eager and rapid voice to some invisible auditor.

"Nell is mad!" said Asa, half in contempt, and yet not a little in concern. "The girl is dreaming with her eyes open; and thinks she sees some of them fierce creatur's, with hard names, with which the doctor fill her ears."

"Can it be that the child has found a scout of the Sioux?" said Ishmael, bending his look toward the plain; but a low, significant whisper from Abiram drew his eyes quickly upward again, where they were turned just in time to perceive that the cloth of the tent was agitated by a motion very evidently different from the quivering occasioned by the wind. "Let her, if she dare!" the squatter muttered in his teeth. "Abiram, they know my temper too well to play the prank with me!"

"Look for yourself! If the curtain is not lifted, I can see no better than the owl by daylight."

Ishmael struck the breech of his rifle violently on the earth, and shouted, in a voice that might easily have been heard by Ellen, had not her attention still continued rapt on the object which so unaccountably attracted her eyes in the distance.

"Nell!" continued the squatter, "away

with you, fool! Will you bring down punishment on your own head? Why, Nell!—She has forgotten her native speech; let us see if she can understand another language."

Ishmael threw his rifle to his shoulder, and at the next moment it was pointed upward at the summit of the rock. Before time was given for a word of remonstrance, it had sent forth its contents, in its usual streak of bright flame. Ellen started like the frightened chamois, and, uttering a piercing scream, she darted into the tent with a swiftness that left it uncertain whether terror or actual injury had been the penalty of her offense.

The action of the squatter was too sudden and unexpected to admit of prevention; but, the instant it was done, his sons manifested, in an unequivocal manner, the temper with which they witnessed the desperate measure. Angry and fierce glances were interchanged, and a murmur of disapprobation was uttered by the whole in common.

"What has Ellen done, father?" said Asa, with a degree of spirit which was the more striking from being unusual, "that she should be shot at like a straggling deer or a hungry wolf?"

"Mischief," deliberately returned the squatter; but with a cool expression of defiance in his eye, that showed how little he was moved by the ill-concealed humor of his children. "Mischief, boy—mischief! Take you heed that the disorder don't spread!"

"It would need a different treatment in a man than in yon screaming girl."

"Asa, you ar' a man, as you have often boasted; but remember, I am your father, and your better."

"I know it well; and what sort of a father?"

"Harkee, boy; I more than half believe that your drowsy head let in the Sioux. Be modest in speech, my watchful son, or you may have to answer yet for the mischief your own bad conduct has brought upon us."

"I'll stay no longer to be hectored like a child in petticoats. You talk of law, as if you knew of none, and yet you keep me

down as though I had not life and wants of my own. I'll stay no longer to be treated like one of your meanest cattle!"

"The world is wide, my gallant boy, and there's many a noble plantation on it, without a tenant. Go; you have title-deeds signed and sealed to your hand. Few fathers portion their children better than Ishmael Bush; you will say that for me at least, when you get to be a wealthy landholder."

"Look! father, look!" exclaimed several voices at once, seizing with avidity an opportunity to interrupt a dialogue which threatened to become more violent.

"Look!" repeated Abiram, in a voice which sounded hollow and warning; "if you have time for anything but quarrels, Ishmael, look!"

The squatter turned slowly from his offending son, and cast an eye that still lowered with deep resentment upward; but which, the instant it caught a view of the object that now attracted the attention of all around him, changed its expression to one of astonishment and dismay.

A female stood on the spot from which Ellen had been so fearfully expelled. Her person was of the smallest size that is believed to comport with beauty, and which poets and artists have chosen as the *beau idéal* of female loveliness. Her dress was of a dark and glossy silk, and fluttered like gossamer around her form. Long, flowing, and curling tresses of hair, still blacker and more shining than her robe, fell at times about her shoulders, completely enveloping the whole of her delicate bust in their ringlets; or at others streaming in the wind. The elevation at which she stood prevented a close examination of the lineaments of a countenance which, however, it might be seen was youthful, and, at the moment of her unlooked-for appearance, eloquent with feeling. So young, indeed, did this fair and fragile being appear, that it might be doubted whether the age of childhood was entirely passed. One small and exquisitely molded hand was pressed on her heart, while with the other she made an impressive gesture, which seemed to invite Ish-

mael, if further violence was meditated, to direct it against her bosom.

The silent wonder with which the group of borderers gazed upward at so extraordinary a spectacle was only interrupted as the person of Ellen was seen emerging with timidity from the tent, as if equally urged by apprehensions in behalf of herself, and the fears which she felt on account of her companion, to remain concealed and to advance. She spoke, but her words were unheard by those below, and unheeded by her to whom they were addressed. The latter, however, as if content with the offer she had made of herself as a victim to the resentment of Ishmael, now calmly retired, and the spot she had so lately occupied became vacant, leaving a sort of stupid impression on the spectators beneath, not unlike that which it might be supposed would have been created had they just been gazing at some supernatural vision.

More than a minute of profound silence succeeded, during which the sons of Ishmael still continued gazing at the naked rock in stupid wonder. Then, as eye met eye, an expression of novel intelligence passed from one to the other, indicating that to them, at least, the appearance of this extraordinary tenant of the pavilion was as unexpected as it was incomprehensible. At length Asa, in right of his years, and moved by the rankling impulse of the recent quarrel, took on himself the office of interrogator. Instead, however, of braving the resentment of his father, of whose fierce nature, when aroused, he had had too frequent evidence to excite it wantonly, he turned upon the cowering person of Abiram, observing with a sneer:

"This, then, is the beast you were bringing into the prairies for a decoy! I know you to be a man who seldom troubles truth when anything worse may answer, but I never knew you to outdo yourself so thoroughly before. The newspapers of Kentuck have called you a dealer in black flesh a hundred times, but little did they reckon that you drove the trade into white families."

"Who is a kidnapper?" demanded Abiram, with a blustering show of resent-

ment. "Am I to be called to account for every lie they put in print throughout the States? Look to your own family, boy; look to yourselves. The very stumps of Kentucky and Tennessee cry out ag'in ye. Ay, my tonguey gentleman, I have seen father and mother and three children, yourself for one, published on the logs and stubs of the settlements, with dollars enough for reward to have made an honest man rich, for——"

He was interrupted by a back-handed but violent blow on the mouth that caused him to totter, and which left the impression of its weight in the starting blood and swelling lips.

"Asa," said the father, advancing with a portion of that dignity with which the hand of Nature seems to have invested the parental character, "you have struck the brother of your mother!"

"I have struck the abuser of the whole family," returned the angry youth; "and, unless he teaches his tongue a wiser language, he had better part with it altogether as the unruly member. I'm no great performer with the knife, but on an occasion could make out, myself, to cut off a sland——"

"Boy, twice have you forgotten yourself to-day. Be careful that it does not happen the third time. When the law of the land is weak, it is right the law of Nature should be strong. You understand me, Asa; and you know me. As for you, Abiram, the child has done you wrong, and it is my place to see you righted. Remember, I tell you justice shall be done; it is enough. But you have said hard things ag'in me and my family. If the hounds of the law have put their bills on the trees and stumps of the clearing, it was for no act of dishonesty, as you know, but because we maintain the rule that 'arth is common property. No, Abiram; could I wash my hands of things done by your advice, as easily as I can of the things done by the whisperings of the devil, my sleep would be quieter at night, and none who bear my name need blush to hear it mentioned. Peace, Asa, and you too, man; enough has been said. Let us all think well be-

fore anything is added that may make what is already so bad still more bitter."

Ishmael waved his hand with authority, as he ended, and turned away with the air of one who felt assured that those he had addressed would not have the temerity to dispute his commands. Asa evidently struggled with himself to compel the required obedience, but his heavy nature quietly sank into its ordinary repose, and he soon appeared again the being he really was—dangerous only at moments, and one whose passions were too sluggish to be long maintained at the point of ferocity. Not so with Abiram. While there was an appearance of a personal conflict between him and his colossal nephew, his mien had expressed the infallible evidences of engrossing apprehension; but now that the authority as well as gigantic strength of the father were interposed between him and his assailant, his countenance changed from paleness to a livid hue, that bespoke how deeply the injury he had received rankled in his breast. Like Asa, however, he acquiesced in the decision of the squatter; and the appearance, at least, of harmony was restored again among a set of beings who were restrained by no obligations more powerful than the frail web of authority with which Ishmael had been able to envelop his children.

One effect of the quarrel had been to divert the thoughts of the young men from their recent visitor. With the dispute that succeeded the disappearance of the fair stranger, all recollection of her existence appeared to have vanished. A few ominous and secret conferences, it is true, were held apart, during which the direction of the eyes of the different speakers betrayed their subject; but these threatening symptoms soon disappeared, and the whole party was again seen broken into its usual listless, silent and lounging groups.

"I will go upon the rocks, boys, and look abroad for the savages," said Ishmael, shortly after, advancing toward them with a mien which he intended should be conciliating at the same time that it was authoritative. "If there is nothing to fear, we will go out on the plain; the

day is too good to be lost in words, like women in the towns wrangling over their tea and sugared cakes."

Without waiting for approbation or dissent, the squatter advanced to the base of the rock, which formed a sort of perpendicular wall, nearly twenty feet high, around the whole acclivity. Ishmael, however, directed his footsteps to a point where an ascent might be made through a narrow cleft, which he had taken the precaution to fortify with a breastwork of cotton-wood logs, and which, in its turn, was defended by a *chevaux de frise* of the branches of the same tree. Here an armed man was usually kept; as at the key of the whole position, and here one of the young men now stood, indolently leaning against the rock, ready to protect the pass, if it should prove necessary, until the whole party could be mustered at the several points of defense.

From this place the squatter found the ascent still difficult, partly by nature and partly by artificial impediments, until he reached a sort of terrace, or, to speak more properly, the plain of the elevation, where he had established the huts in which the whole family dwelt. These tenelements were, as already mentioned, of that class which are so often seen on the borders, and such as belonged to the infancy of architecture, being simply formed of logs, bark and poles. The area on which they stood contained several hundred square feet, and was sufficiently elevated above the plain greatly to lessen, if not to remove, all danger from Indian missiles. Here Ishmael believed he might leave his infants in comparative security, under the protection of their spirited mother; and here he now found Esther engaged at her ordinary domestic employments, surrounded by her daughters, and lifting her voice, in declamatory censure, as one or another of the idle fry incurred her displeasure, and far too much engrossed with the tempest of her own conversation to know anything of the violent scene which had been passing below.

"A fine windy place you have chosen for the camp, Ishmael!" she commenced, or rather continued, by merely diverting

the attack from a sobbing girl of ten, at her elbow, to her husband. "My word! if I haven't to count the young ones every ten minutes, to see they are not flying away among the buzzards or the ducks. Why do ye all keep hovering round the rock, like lolloping reptiles in the spring, when the heavens are beginning to be alive with birds, man? D'ye think mouths can be filled, and hunger satisfied, by laziness and sleep?"

"You'll have your say, Esther," said the husband, using the provincial pronunciation of America for the name, and regarding his noisy companion with a look of habitual tolerance rather than of affection. "But the birds you shall have, if your own tongue don't frighten them to take too high a flight. Ay, woman," he continued, standing on the very spot whence he had so rudely banished Ellen, which he had by this time gained, "and buffalo, too, if my eye can tell the animal at the distance of a Spanish league."

"Come down; come down, and be doing, instead of talking. A talking man is no better than a barking dog. Nell shall hang out the cloth, if any of the red-skins show themselves, in time to give you notice. But, Ishmael, what have you been killing, my man?—for it was your rifle I heard a few minutes ago, unless I have lost my skill in sounds."

"Pooh! 'twas to frighten the hawk you see sailing above the rock."

"Hawk, indeed! at your time of day to be shooting at hawks and buzzards, with eighteen open mouths to feed. Look at the bee, and at the beaver, my good man, and learn to be a provider. Why, Ishmael! I believe my soul," she continued, dropping the tow she was twisting on a distaff, "the man is in that tent ag'in! More than half his time is spent about the worthless, good-for-nothing —"

The sudden reappearance of her husband closed the mouth of the wife, and, as the former descended to the place where Esther had resumed her employment, she was content to grumble forth her dissatisfaction instead of expressing it in more audible terms.

The dialogue that now took place between the affectionate pair was sufficiently succinct and expressive. The woman was at first a little brief and sullen in her answers, but care for her family soon rendered her more complaisant. As the purport of the conversation was merely an engagement to hunt during the remainder of the day, in order to provide the chief necessary of life, we shall not stop to record it.

With this resolution, then, the squatter descended to the plain and divided his forces into two parts, one of which was to remain as a guard with the fortress, and the other to accompany him to the field. He warily included Asa and Abiram in his own party, well knowing that no authority short of his own was competent to repress the fierce disposition of his headlong son, if fairly awakened. When these arrangements were completed, the hunters sallied forth, separating at no great distance from the rock, in order to form about the distant herd of buffaloes.

CHAPTER IX.

"Priscian a little scratched;
'Twill serve."—LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST.

HAVING made the reader acquainted with the manner in which Ishmael Bush had disposed of his family, under circumstances that might have proved so embarrassing to most other men, we shall again shift the scene a few short miles from the place last described, preserving, however, the due and natural succession of time. At the very moment that the squatter and his sons departed in the manner mentioned in the preceding chapter, two men were intently occupied in a swale that lay along the borders of a little run, just out of cannon-shot from the encampment, discussing the merits of a savory bison's hump, that had been prepared for their palates with the utmost attention to the particular merits of that description of food. The choice morsel had been judiciously separated from the adjoining and less worthy parts of the

beast, and, enveloped in the hairy coating provided by Nature, it had duly undergone the heat of the customary subterranean oven, and was now laid before its proprietors in all the culinary glory of the prairies. So far as richness, delicacy, and wildness of flavor, and substantial nourishment were concerned, the viand might well have claimed a decided superiority over the meretricious cookery and labored compounds of the most renowned artist; though the service of the dainty was certainly achieved in a manner far from artificial. It would appear that the two fortunate mortals, to whose happy lot it fell to enjoy a meal in which health and appetite lent so keen a relish to the exquisite food of the American deserts, were far from being insensible of the advantage they possessed.

The one to whose knowledge in the culinary art the other was indebted for his banquet, seemed the least disposed of the two to profit by his own skill. He ate, it is true, and with a relish; but it was always with the moderation with which age is apt to temper the appetite. No such restraint, however, was imposed on the inclination of his companion. In the very flower of his days and in the vigor of manhood, the homage that he paid to the work of his more aged friend's hands was of the most profound and engrossing character. As one delicious morsel succeeded another he rolled his eyes towards his companion, and seemed to express that gratitude which he had not speech to utter, in looks of the most benignant nature.

"Cut more into the heart of it, lad," said the trapper, for it was the venerable inhabitant of those vast wastes who had served the bee-hunter with the banquet in question; "cut more into the center of the piece; there you will find the genuine riches of natur'; and that without need from spices, or any of your biting mustard, to give it a foreign relish."

"If I had but a cup of metheglin," said Paul, stopping to perform the necessary operation of breathing, "I should swear this was the strongest meal that was ever placed before the mouth of man!"

"Ay, ay, well you may call it strong,"

returned the other, laughing after his peculiar manner, in pure satisfaction at witnessing the infinite contentment of his companion; "strong it is, and strong it makes him who eats it!—Here, Hector," tossing the patient hound, who was watching his eye with a wistful look, a portion of the meat, "you have need of strength, my friend, in your old days, as well as your master. Now, lad, there is a dog that has eaten and slept wiser and better, ay, and that of richer food, than any king of them all, and why? Because he has used and not abused the gifts of his Maker. He was made a hound, and like a hound has he feasted. Them did he create men; but they have eaten like famished wolves! A good and prudent dog has Hector proved, and never have I found one of his breed false in nose or friendship. Do you know the difference between the cookery of the wilderness and that which is found in the settlements? No! I see plainly you don't, by your appetite; then I will tell you. The one follows men, the other *Natur'*. One thinks he can add to the gifts of the Creator, while the other is humble enough to enjoy them. Therein lies the secret."

"I tell you trapper," said Paul, who was very little edified by the morality with which his associate saw fit to season their repast, "that every day while we are in this place, and they are likely to be many, I will shoot a buffalo and you shall cook his hump!"

"I cannot say that, I cannot say that. The beast is good, take him in what part you will, and it was to be food for man that he was fashioned; but I cannot say that I will be a witness and a helper to the waste of killing one daily."

"The devil a bit of waste shall there be, old man. If they all turn out as good as this, I will engage to eat them clean myself, even to the hoofs. How now, who comes here! some one with a long nose, I will answer; and one that has led him on a true scent, if he is following the trail of a dinner."

The individual who interrupted the conversation, and who had elicited the fore-

going remark of Paul, was seen advancing along the margin of the run with a deliberate pace, in a direct line for the two revelers. As there was nothing formidable nor hostile in his appearance, the bee-hunter, instead of suspending his operations, rather increased his efforts, in a manner which would seem to imply that he doubted whether the hump would suffice for the proper entertainment of all who were now likely to partake of the delicious morsel. With the trapper, however, the case was different. His more tempered appetite was already satisfied, and he faced the new-comer with a look of cordiality that plainly evinced how very opportune he considered his arrival.

"Come on, friend," he said, waving his hand, as he observed the stranger to pause a moment, apparently in doubt. "Come on, I say; if hunger be your guide, it has led you to a fitting place. Here is meat, and this youth can give you corn, parched till it be whiter than the upland snow; come on, without fear. We are not ravenous beasts, eating of each other, but Christian men, receiving thankfully that which the Lord hath seen fit to give."

"Venerable hunter," returned the doctor, for it was no other than the naturalist on one of his daily exploring expeditions, "I rejoice greatly at this happy meeting; we are lovers of the same pursuits, and should be friends."

"Lord, Lord!" said the old man, laughing, without much deference to the rules of decorum, in the philosopher's face; "it is the man who wanted to make me believe that a name could change the *natur'* of a beast! Come, friend, you are welcome, though your notions are a little blinded with reading too many books. Sit ye down, and, after eating of this morsel, tell me, if you can, the name of the creature that has bestowed on you its flesh for a meal?"

The eyes of Dr. Battius (for we deem it decorous to give the good man the appellation he most preferred)—the eyes of Dr. Battius sufficiently denoted the satisfaction with which he listened to this proposal. The exercise he had taken, and the

sharpness of the wind, proved excellent stimulants; and Paul himself had hardly been in better plight to do credit to the trapper's cookery than was the lover of Nature, when the grateful invitation met his ears. Indulging in a small laugh, which his exertions to repress reduced nearly to a simper, he took the indicated seat by the old man's side and made the customary dispositions to commence his meal without further ceremony.

"I should be ashamed of my profession," he said, swallowing a morsel of the hump with evident delight, slyly endeavoring at the same time to distinguish the peculiarities of the singed and defaced skin. "I ought to be ashamed of my profession, were there beast or bird, on the continent of America, that I could not tell by some one of the many evidences which science has enlisted in her cause. This—then—the food is nutritious and savory—a mouthful of your corn, friend, if you please?"

Paul, who continued eating with increasing industry, looking askant not unlike a dog when engaged in the same agreeable pursuit, threw him his pouch, without deeming it at all necessary to suspend his own labors.

"You were saying, friend, that you have many ways of telling the creatur?" observed the attentive trapper.

"Many—many and infallible. Now, the animals that are carnivorous are known by their incisors."

"Their what?" demanded the trapper.

"The teeth with which Nature has furnished them for defense, and in order to tear their food. Again——"

"Look you then for the teeth of this creatur," interrupted the trapper, who was bent on convicting a man who had presumed to enter into competition with himself, in matters pertaining to the wilds, of gross ignorance; "turn the piece round and find your insideovers."

The doctor complied, and of course without success; though he profited by the occasion to take another fruitless glance at the wrinkled hide.

"Well, friend, do you find the things you need, before you can pronounce the creatur' a duck or a salmon?"

"I apprehend the entire animal is not here?"

"You may well say as much," cried Paul, who was now compelled to pause from pure repletion; "I will answer for some pounds of the fellow, weighed by the truest steel-yards west of the Alleghanies. Still you make out to keep soul and body together with what is left," reluctantly eyeing a piece large enough to feed twenty men, but which he felt compelled to abandon from satiety; "cut in nigher to the heart, as the old man says, and you will find the riches of the piece."

"The heart!" exclaimed the doctor, inwardly delighted to learn there was a distinct organ to be submitted to his inspection. "Ay, let me see the heart—it will at once determine the character of the animal—certainly this is not the cor—ay, sure enough it is—the animal must be of the order *Bellua*, from its obese habits!"

He was interrupted by a long and hearty, but still a noiseless fit of merriment from the trapper, which was considered so ill-timed by the offended naturalist, as to produce an instant cessation of speech, if not a stagnation of ideas.

"Listen to his beasts' habits and belly orders," said the old man, delighted with the evident embarrassment of his rival; "and then he says it is not the core! Why, man, you are further from the truth than you are from the settlements, with all your bookish larning and hard words, which I have, once for all, said cannot be understood by any tribe or nation east of the Rocky Mountains. Beastly habits or no beastly habits, the creatur's are to be seen cropping the prairies by tens of thousands, and the piece in your hand is the core of as juicy a buffalo-hump as stomach need crave!"

"My aged companion," said Obed, struggling to keep down a rising irascibility that he conceived would ill comport with the dignity of his character, "your system is erroneous, from the premises to the conclusion; and your classification so faulty as to confound the distinctions of science. The buffalo is not gifted with a hump at all; nor is his flesh savory and wholesome, as I must acknowledge it

would seem the subject before us may well be characterized——”

“There I’m dead against you, and clearly with the trapper,” interrupted Paul Hover. “The man who denies that buffalo-beef is good, should scorn to eat it!”*

The doctor, whose observation of the bee-hunter had hitherto been exceedingly cursory, stared at the new speaker with a look which denoted something like recognition.

“The principal characteristics of your countenance, friend,” he said, “are familiar; either you, or some other specimen of your class, is known to me.”

“I am the man you met in the woods east of the big river, and whom you tried to persuade to line a yellow hornet to his nest; as if my eye was not too true to mistake any other animal for a honey-bee, in a clear day! We tarried together a week, as you may remember; you at your toads and lizards, and I at my high holes and hollow trees; and a good job we made of it between us! I filled my tubs with the sweetest honey I ever sent to the settlements, besides housing a dozen hives; and your bag was near bursting with a crawling museum. I never was bold enough to put the question to your face, stranger, but I reckon you are a keeper of curiosities?”†

“Ay! that is another of their wanton wickednesses!” exclaimed the trapper. “They slay the buck and the moose, and the wild-cat, and all the beasts that range the woods, and stuffing them with worth-

* It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader that the animal so often alluded to in this book, and which is vulgarly called the buffalo, is in truth the bison; hence so many *contre-temps* between the men of the prairies and the men of science.

† The pursuit of a bee-hunter is not uncommon on the skirts of American society, though it is a little embellished here. When the bees are seen sucking the flowers, their pursuer contrives to capture one or two. He then chooses a proper spot, and, suffering one to escape, the insect invariably takes its flight toward the hive. Changing his ground to a greater or less distance, according to circumstances, the bee-hunter then permits another to escape. Having watched the course of the bees, which is technically called lining, he is enabled to calculate the intersecting angle of the two lines, which is the hive.

less rags, and placing eyes of glass into their heads, they set them up to be stared at, and call them the creatur’s of the Lord; as if any mortal effigy could equal the works of his hand!”

“I know you well!” returned the doctor, on whom the plaint of the old man produced no visible impression. “I know you,” offering his hand cordially to Paul; “it was a prolific week, as my herbal and catalogues shall one day prove. Ay, I remember you well, young man. You are of the *class*, mammalia; *order*, primates; *genus*, homo; *species*, Kentucky.” Paus- ing to smile at his own humor, the naturalist proceeded: “Since our separation, I have journeyed far, having entered into a compactum or agreement with a certain man named Ishmael——”

“Bush!” interrupted the impatient and reckless Paul. “By the Lord, trapper, this is the very blood-letter that Ellen told me of!”

“Then Nelly has not done me credit for what I trust I deserve,” returned the single-minded doctor, “for I am not of the phlebotomizing school at all, greatly preferring the practice which purifies the blood instead of abstracting it.”

“It was a blunder of mine, good stranger; the girl called you a skillful man.”

“Therein she may have exceeded my merits,” Dr. Battius continued, bowing with sufficient meekness. “But Ellen is a good, and a kind, and a spirited girl, too. A kind and a sweet girl I have ever found Nelly Wade to be.”

“The devil you have!” cried Paul, dropping the morsel he was sucking, from sheer reluctance to abandon the hump, and casting a fierce and direct look into the very teeth of the unconscious physician. “I reckon, stranger, you have a mind to bag Ellen, too!”

“The riches of the whole vegetable and animal world would not tempt me to harm a hair of her head! I love the child with what may be called *amor naturalis*—or rather *paternus*—the affection of a father.”

“Ay—that indeed is more befitting the difference in your years,” Paul coolly

rejoined, stretching forth his hand to regain the rejected morsel. "You would be no better than a drone, at your time of day, with a young hive to feed and swarm."

"Yes, there is reason, because there is natur', in what he says," observed the trapper; "but, friend, you have said you were a dweller in the camp of one Ishmael Bush?"

"True; it is in virtue of a compactum——"

"I know but little of the virtue of packing, though I follow trapping, in my old age, for a livelihood. They tell me that skins are well kept in the new fashion, but it is long since I have left off killing more than I need for food and garments. I was an eye-witness myself, of the manner in which the Sioux broke into your encampment, and drove off the cattle; stripping the poor man you call Ishmael of his smallest hoofs, counting even the cloven feet."

"*Asinus* excepted," muttered the doctor, who by this time was discussing his portion of the hump, in utter forgetfulness of all its scientific attributes—" *asinus domesticus Americanus* excepted."

"I am glad to hear that so many of them are saved, though I know not the value of the animals you name; which is nothing uncommon, seeing how long it is that I have been out of the settlements. But can you tell me, friend, what the traveler carries under the white cloth he guards with teeth as sharp as a wolf that quarrels for the carcass the hunter has left?"

"You've heard of it!" exclaimed the other, dropping the morsel he was conveying to his mouth in manifest surprise.

"Nay, I have heard nothing, but I have seen the cloth, and had like to have been bitten for no greater crime than wishing to know what it covered."

"Bitten! then, after all, the animal must be carnivorous! It is too tranquil for the *Ursus horridus*; if it were the *Canis latrans*, the voice would betray it. Nor would Nelly Wade be so familiar with any of the *genus Veræ*. Venerable hunter! the solitary animal confined in that wagon by

day, and in the tent at night, has occasioned me more perplexity of mind than the whole catalogue of quadrupeds besides; and for this plain reason: I did not know how to class it."

"You think it a ravenous beast?"

"I know it to be a quadruped: your own danger proves it to be carnivorous."

During this broken explanation Paul Hover had sat silent and thoughtful, regarding each speaker with deep attention. But, suddenly moved by the manner of the doctor, the latter had scarcely time to utter his positive assertion, before the young man bluntly demanded:

"And pray, friend, what may you call a quadruped?"

"A vagary of Nature, wherein she has displayed less of her infinite wisdom than is usual. Could rotary levers be substituted for two of the limbs, agreeably to the improvement in my new order of phalangacura, which might be rendered into the vernacular as lever-legged, there would be a delightful protection and harmony in the construction. But as the quadruped is now formed, I call it a mere vagary of Nature; no other than a vagary."

"Harkee, stranger! In Kentucky we are but small dealers in dictionaries. Vagary is as hard a word to turn into English as quadruped."

"A quadruped is an animal with four legs—a beast."

"A beast! Do you then reckon that Ishmael Bush travels with a beast caged in that wagon?"

"I know it; and lend me your ear—not literally, friend," observing Paul to start and look surprised; "but figuratively—through its functions, and you shall hear. I have already made known that, in virtue of a compactum, I journey with the aforesaid Ishmael Bush; but though I am bound to perform certain duties while the journey lasts, there is no condition which says that the journey shall be sempiternum, or eternal. Now, though this region may scarcely be said to be wedded to science, being to all intents a virgin territory as respects the inquirer into natural history, still it is greatly des-

titute of the treasures of the vegetable kingdom. I should, therefore, have tarried some hundreds of miles more to the eastward, were it not for the inward propensity that I feel to have the beast in question inspected and suitably described and classed. For that matter," he continued, dropping his voice like one who imparts an important secret, "I am not without hopes of persuading Ishmael to let me dissect it."

"You have seen the creature?"

"Not with the organs of sight; but with much more infallible instruments of vision; the conclusions of reason, and the deductions of scientific premises. I have watched the habits of the animal, young man, and can fearlessly pronounce, by evidence that would be thrown away on ordinary observers, that it is of vast dimensions, inactive, possibly torpid, of voracious appetite, and, as it now appears by the direct testimony of this venerable hunter, ferocious and carnivorous!"

"I should be better pleased, stranger," said Paul, on whom the doctor's description was making a very sensible impression, "to be sure the creature was a beast at all."

"As to that, if I wanted evidence of a fact which is abundantly apparent by the habits of the animal, I have the word of Ishmael himself. A reason can be given for my smallest deductions. I am not troubled, young man, with a vulgar and idle curiosity, but all my aspirations after knowledge, as I humbly believe, are, first, for the advancement of learning; and, secondly, for the benefit of my fellow-creatures. I pined greatly in secret to know the contents of the tent, which Ishmael guarded so carefully, and which he had covenanted that I should swear (*jurare per deos*) not to approach nigher than a defined number of cubits for a definite period of time. Your *jusjurandum*, or oath, is a serious matter, and not to be dealt in lightly; but as my expedition depended on complying, I consented to the act, reserving to myself at all times the power of distant observation. It is now some ten days since Ishmael, pitying the state in which he saw me, a humble lover of sci-

ence, imparted the fact that the vehicle contained a beast, which he was carrying into the prairies as a decoy, by which he intends to entrap others of the same genus, or perhaps species. Since then my task has been reduced simply to watch the habits of the animal, and to record the results. When we reach a certain distance, where these beasts are said to abound, I am to have the liberal examination of the specimen."

Paul continued to listen, in the most profound silence, until the doctor concluded his singular but characteristic explanation; then the incredulous bee-hunter shook his head, and saw fit to reply by saying:

"Stranger, old Ishmael has burrowed you in the very bottom of a hollow tree, where your eyes will be of no more use than the sting of a drone. I, too, know something of that very wagon, and I may say that I have lined the squatter down into a flat lie. Harkee, friend; do you think a girl like Ellen Wade would become the companion of a wild beast?"

"Why not? why not?" repeated the naturalist; "Nelly has a taste, and often listens with pleasure to the treasures that I am sometimes compelled to scatter in this desert. Why should she not study the habits of any animal, even though it were a rhinoceros?"

"Softly, softly," returned the equally positive, and, though less scientific, certainly on this subject better instructed bee-hunter; "Ellen is a girl of spirit, and one, too, that knows her own mind, or I'm much mistaken; but, with all her courage and brave looks, she is no better than a woman after all. Haven't I often had the girl crying——"

"You are an acquaintance, then, of Nelly's?"

"The devil a bit. But I know woman is woman; and all the books in Kentucky couldn't make Ellen Wade go into a tent alone with a ravenous beast!"

"It seems to me," the trapper calmly observed, "that there is something dark and hidden in this matter. I am a witness that the traveler likes none to look into the tent, and I have proof more sure

than what either of you can lay claim to, that the wagon does not carry the cage of a beast. Here is Hector, come of a breed with noses as true and faithful as a hand that is all-powerful has made any of their kind, and, had there been a beast in the place, the hound would long since have told it to his master.

"Do you pretend to oppose a dog to a man? brutality to learning? instinct to reason?" exclaimed the doctor, in some heat. "In what manner, pray, can a hound distinguish the habits, species, or even the genus of an animal, like reasoning, learned, scientific, triumphant man?"

"In what manner!" coolly repeated the veteran woodsman. "Listen; and if you believe that a schoolmaster can make a quicker wit than the Lord, you shall be made to see how much you're mistaken. Do you not hear something move in the brake? it has been cracking the twigs these five minutes. Now tell me what the creatur' is?"

"I hope nothing ferocious!" exclaimed the doctor, who still retained a lively impression of his rencontre with the *Vespertilio horribilis*. "You have rifles, friends; would it not be prudent to prime them? for this fowling-piece of mine is little to be depended on."

"There may be reason in what he says," returned the trapper, so far complying as to take his piece from the place where it had lain during the repast, and raising its muzzle in the air. "Now tell me the name of the creatur'!"

"It exceeds the limits of earthly knowledge! Buffon himself could not tell whether the animal was a quadruped, or of the order serpens! a sheep, or a tiger!"

"Then was your Buffon a fool to my Hector! Here, pup! What is it, dog? shall we run it down, pup, or shall we let it pass?"

The hound, which had already manifested to the experienced trapper, by the tremulous motion of his ears, his consciousness of the proximity of a strange animal, lifted his head from his forepaws and slightly parted his lips, as if about to show the remnants of his teeth. But, suddenly

abandoning his hostile purpose, he snuffed the air a moment, gaped heavily, shook himself, and peaceably resumed his recumbent attitude.

"Now, Doctor," cried the trapper, triumphantly, "I am well convinced there is neither game nor ravenous beast in the thicket; and that I call substantial knowledge to a man who is too old to be a spendthrift of his strength, and yet who would not wish to be a meal for a panther!"

The dog interrupted his master by a growl, but still kept his head crouched to the earth.

"It is a man!" exclaimed the trapper, rising. "It is a man, if I am a judge of the creatur's ways. There is but little said atwixt the hound and me, but we seldom mistake each other's meaning!"

Paul Hover sprang to his feet like lightning; and, throwing forward his rifle, he cried in a voice of menace:

"Come forward if a friend; if an enemy, stand ready for the worst!"

"A friend, a white man, and, I hope, a Christian," returned a voice from the thicket; which opened at the same instant, and at the next the speaker made his appearance.

CHAPTER X.

"Go apart, Adam, and thou shalt hear
How he will shake me up."

—AS YOU LIKE IT.

It is well known that, even long before the immense regions of Louisiana changed their masters for the second, and it is to be hoped, for the last time, its unguarded territory was by no means safe from the inroads of white adventurers. The semi-barbarous hunters from the Canadas, the same description of population, a little more enlightened, from the States, and the metifs or half-breeds, who claimed to be ranked in the class of white men, were scattered among the different Indian tribes, or gleaned a scanty livelihood in solitude, amid the haunts of the beaver and the bison; or, to adopt the

popular nomenclature of the country—the of the buffalo.*

It was, therefore, no unusual thing for strangers to encounter each other in the endless wastes of the West. By signs which an unpracticed eye would pass unobserved, a borderer knew when one of his fellows was in his vicinity, and he avoided or approached the intruder as best comported with his feeling or his interests. Generally these interviews were pacific; for the whites had a common enemy to dread, in the ancient and perhaps more lawful occupants of the country; but instances were not rare in which jealousy and cupidity had caused them to terminate in scenes of the most violent and ruthless treachery. The meeting of two hunters on the American Desert, as we find it convenient sometimes to call this region, was consequently somewhat in the suspicious and wary manner in which two vessels draw together in a sea that is known to be infested with pirates. While neither party is willing to betray its weakness by exhibiting distrust, neither is disposed to commit itself by any acts of confidence from which it may be difficult to recede.

Such was, in some degree, the character of the present interview. The stranger drew nigh deliberately; keeping his eyes steadily fastened on the movements of the other party, while he purposely created little difficulties to impede an approach which might prove too hasty. On the other hand, Paul stood playing with the lock of his rifle, too proud to let it appear that three men could manifest any apprehension of a solitary individual, and yet too prudent to omit, entirely, the customary precautions. The principal reason of the marked difference which the two legitimate proprietors of the banquet made in the receptions of their guests, was to be explained by the entire difference which existed in their respective appearances.

*In addition to the scientific distinctions which mark the two species, it may be added, with due reference to Dr. Battius, that a much more important particular is the fact that, while the former of these animals is delicious and nourishing food, the latter is scarcely edible.

While the exterior of the naturalist was decidedly pacific, not to say abstracted, that of the newcomer was distinguished by an air of vigor, and a front and step which it would not have been difficult to have at once pronounced to be military.

He wore a forage-cap of fine blue cloth, from which depended a soiled tassel in gold, and which was nearly buried in a mass of exuberant, curling, jet-black hair. Around his throat he had negligently fastened a stock of black silk. His body was enveloped in a hunting-shirt of dark green, trimmed with the yellow fringes and ornaments that were sometimes seen among the border-troops of the Confederacy. Beneath this, however, were visible the collar and lappels of a jacket, similar in color and cloth to the cap. His lower limbs were protected by buckskin leggings, and his feet by the ordinary Indian moccasins. A richly ornamented and exceedingly dangerous straight dirk was stuck in a sash of red silk net-work; another girdle, or rather belt, of uncolored leather contained a pair of the smallest-sized pistols, in holsters nicely made to fit. And across his shoulder was thrown a short, heavy military rifle; its horn and pouch occupying the usual places beneath his arms. At his back he bore a knapsack, marked by the well-known initials that have since gained for the Government of the United States the good-humored and quaint appellation of Uncle Sam.

"I come in amity," the stranger said, like one too much accustomed to the sight of arms to be startled at the ludicrously belligerent attitude which Dr. Battius had seen fit to assume—"I come as a friend; and am one whose pursuits and wishes will not at all interfere with your own."

"Harkee, stranger," said Paul Hover, bluntly; "do you understand lining a bee from this open place into a wood, distant, perhaps a dozen miles?"

"The bee is a bird I have never been compelled to seek," returned the other, laughing; "though I have, too, been something of a fowler in my time."

"I thought as much," exclaimed Paul, thrusting forth his hand frankly, and with

the true freedom of manner that marks an American borderer. "Let us cross fingers. You and I will never quarrel about the comb, since you set so little store by the honey. And now, if your stomach has an empty corner, and you know how to relish a genuine dew-drop 'when it falls into your very mouth, there lies the exact morsel to put into it. Try it, stranger; and having tried it, if you don't call it as snug a fit as you have made since— How long are you from the settlements, pray?"

"'Tis many weeks, and I fear it may be as many more before I can return. I will, however, gladly profit by your invitation, for I have fasted since the rising of yesterday's sun, and I know too well the merits of a bison's hump to reject the food."

"Ah! you are acquainted with the dish. Well, therein you have the start of me, in setting out, though I think I may say we could now start on equal ground. I should be the happiest fellow between Kentucky and the Rocky Mountains, if I had a snug cabin, near some old wood that was filled with hollow trees, just such a hump every day as that for a dinner, a load of fresh straw for hives, and little El——"

"Little what?" demanded the stranger, evidently amused with the communicative and frank disposition of the bee-hunter.

"Something that I shall have one day, and which concerns nobody so much as myself," returned Paul, picking the flint of his rifle, and beginning very cavalierly to whistle an air well known on the waters of the Mississippi.

During this preliminary discourse the stranger had taken his seat by the side of the hump, and was already making a serious inroad on its relics. Dr. Battius, however, watched his movements with a jealousy still more striking than the cordial reception which the open-hearted Paul had just exhibited.

But the doubts, or rather apprehensions, of the naturalist were of a character altogether different from the confidence of the bee-hunter. He had been struck with the stranger's using the legitimate instead of the perverted name of the animal off which

he was making his repast; and, as he had been among the foremost himself to profit by the removal of the impediments which the policy of Spain had placed in the way of all explorers of her transatlantic dominions, whether bent on the purposes of commerce, or, like himself, on the more laudable pursuits of science, he had a sufficiency of every-day philosophy to feel that the same motives which had so powerfully urged himself to his present undertaking might produce a like result on the mind of some other student of Nature. Here, then, was the prospect of an alarming rivalry, which bade fair to strip him of at least a moiety of the just rewards of all his labors, privations and dangers. Under these views of his character, therefore, it is not at all surprising that the native meekness of the naturalist's disposition was a little disturbed, and that he watched the proceedings of the other with such a degree of vigilance as he believed best suited to detect his sinister designs.

"This is truly a delicious repast," observed the unconscious young stranger, for both young and handsome he was fairly entitled to be considered; "either hunger has given a peculiar relish to the viand or the bison may lay claim to be the finest of the ox family!"

"Naturalists, sir, are apt, when they speak familiarly, to give the cow the credit of the genus," said Dr. Battius, swelling with secret distrust, and clearing his throat before speaking, much in the manner that a duellist examines the point of the weapon he is about to plunge into the body of his foe. "The figure is more perfect; as the *bos*, meaning the ox, is unable to perpetuate his kind; and the *bos*, in its most extended meaning, or *vacca*, is altogether the noble animal of the two."

The doctor uttered this opinion with a certain air, that he intended should express his readiness to come, at once, to any of the numerous points of difference which he doubted not existed between them; and he now awaited the blow of his antagonist, intending that his next thrust should be still more vigorous. But

the young stranger appeared much better disposed to partake of the good cheer with which he had been providentially provided, than to take up the cudgels of argument on this or any other of the knotty points which are so apt to furnish the lovers of science with the materials of a mental joust.

"I dare say you are very right, sir," he replied with a most provoking indifference to the importance of the points he conceded. "I dare say you are quite right; and that vacca would have been the better word."

"Pardon me, sir; you are giving a very wrong construction to my language, if you suppose I include, without many and particular qualifications, the *Bibulus Americanus* in the family of the vacca. For, as you well know, sir—or, as I presume I should say, doctor—you have the medical diploma, no doubt?"

"You give me credit for an honor I cannot claim," interrupted the other.

"An under-graduate!—or perhaps your degrees have been taken in some other of the liberal sciences?"

"Still wrong, I do assure you."

"Surely, young man, you have not entered on this important—I may say, this awful service, without some evidence of your fitness for the task! some commission by which you can assert an authority to proceed, or by which you may claim an affinity and a communion with your fellow-workers in the same beneficent pursuits!"

"I know not by what means, or for what purposes, you have made yourself master of my objects!" exclaimed the youth, reddening and rising with a quickness which manifested how little he regarded the grosser appetites, when a subject nearer his heart was approached. "Still, sir, your language is incomprehensible. That pursuit, which in another might perhaps be justly called beneficent, is, in me, a dear and cherished duty; though why a commission should be demanded or needed is, I confess, no less a subject of surprise."

"It is customary to be provided with such a document," returned the doctor, gravely; "and on all suitable occasions,

to produce it, in order that congenial and friendly minds may at once reject unworthy suspicions, and, stepping over what may be called the elements of discourse, come at once to those points which are *considerata* to both."

"It is a strange request!" the youth muttered, turning his frowning eye from one to the other, as if examining the characters of his companions, with a view to weigh their physical powers. Then, putting his hand into his bosom, he drew forth a small box, and, extending it with an air of dignity toward the doctor, he continued: "You will find by this, sir, that I have some right to travel in a country which is now the property of the American States."

"What have we here?" exclaimed the naturalist, opening the folds of a large parchment. "Why this is the sign-manual of the philosopher Jefferson! The seal of state! Countersigned by the minister of war! Why, this is a commission creating Duncan Uncas Middleton a captain of artillery!"

"Of whom? of whom?" repeated the trapper, who had sat regarding the stranger during the whole discourse with eyes that seemed greedily to devour each lineament. "How is the name? did you call him Uncas?—Uncas! Was it Uncas?"

"Such is my name," returned the youth a little haughtily. "It is the appellation of a native chief, that both my uncle and myself bear with pride; for it is a memorial of an important service done my family by a warrior in the old wars of the provinces."

"Uncas! did ye call him Uncas?" repeated the trapper, approaching the youth and parting the dark curls which clustered over his brow without the slightest resistance on the part of their wondering owner. "Ah! my eyes are old, and not so keen as when I was a warrior myself; but I can see the look of the father in the son! I saw it when he first came nigh; but, so many things have since passed before my failing sight, that I could not name the place where I had met his likeness! Tell me, lad, by what name is your father known?"

"He was an officer of the States in the war of the Revolution, and of my own name of course; my mother's brother was called Duncan Uncas Heyward."

"Still Uncas! still Uncas!" echoed the other, trembling with eagerness. "And his father?"

"Was called the same, without the appellation of the native chief. It was to him and to my grandmother, that the service of which I have just spoken was rendered."

"I know'd it! I know'd it!" shouted the old man, in a tremulous voice, his rigid features working powerfully as if the names the other mentioned awakened some long-dormant emotions connected with the events of an anterior age. "I know'd it! son or grandson, it is all the same, it is the blood, and 'tis the look! Tell, me, is he they call Duncan, without the Uncas—is he living?"

The young man shook his head sorrowfully, as he replied in the negative.

"He died full of days and honors. Beloved, happy, and bestowing happiness!"

"Full of days!" repeated the trapper, looking down at his own meager but still muscular hands. "Ah! he lived in the settlements, and was wise only after their fashions. But you have often seen him; and you have heard him discourse of Uncas, and of the wilderness?"

"Often! he was then an officer of the king; but, when the war took place between the crown and her colonies, my grandfather did not forget his birthplace, but threw off the empty allegiance of names, and was true to his proper country; he fought on the side of liberty."

"There was reason in it, and, what is better, there was natur'! Come, sit ye down and tell me what your grand'ther used to speak when his mind dwelt on the wonders of the wilderness."

The youth smiled, no less at the importance than at the interest manifested by the old man; but, as he found there was no longer the least appearance of any violence being contemplated, he unhesitatingly complied.

"Give it all to the trapper, by rule, and by figures of speech," said Paul, very coolly taking his seat on the other side of the soldier. "It is the fashion of old age to relish these ancient traditions, and for that matter I can say that I don't dislike to listen to them myself."

Middleton smiled again, and perhaps with a slight air of derision; but good-naturedly turning to the trapper, he continued:

"It is a long, and might prove a painful story. Bloodshed and all the horrors of Indian cruelty and of Indian warfare are fearfully mingled in the narrative."

"Ay, give it all to us, stranger," continued Paul; "we are used to these matters in Kentuck, and I must say I think a story none the worse for having a few scalps in it."

"But he told you of Uncas, did he?" resumed the trapper, without regarding the slight interruption of the bee-hunter, which amounted to no more than a sort of by-play. "And what thought he and said he of the lad, in his parlor, with the comforts and ease of the settlements at his elbow?"

"I doubt not he used a language similar to that he would have adopted in the woods, and had he stood face to face with his friend——"

"Did he call the savage his friend; the poor, naked, painted warrior? He was not too proud, then, to call the Indian his friend?"

"He even boasted of the connection; and, as you have already heard, bestowed a name on his first-born, which is likely to be handed down as an heir-loom among the rest of his descendants."

"It was well done! like a man; ay! and like a Christian, too! He used to say the Delaware was swift of foot—did he remember that?"

"As the antelope! Indeed, he often spoke of him by the appellation of *Le Cerf Agile*, a name he had obtained by his activity."

"And bold, and fearless, lad!" continued the trapper, looking into the eyes of his companion with a wistfulness that bespoke the delight he received in listening

to the praises of one whom it was so very evident he had once tenderly loved.

"Brave as a blooded hound! Without fear. He always quoted Uncas and his father, who from his wisdom was called the Great Serpent, as models of heroism and constancy."

"He did them justice!—he did them justice! Truer men were not to be found in tribe or nation, be their skins of what color they might. I see your grand'ther was just, and did his duty, too, by his offspring! 'Twas a perilous time he had of it, among them hills, and nobly did he play his own part! Tell me, lad, or officer, I should say—since officer you be—was this all?"

"Certainly not; it was, as I have said, a fearful tale, full of moving incidents and the memories both of my grandfather and my grandmother——"

"Ah!" exclaimed the trapper, tossing a hand into the air as his whole countenance lighted with the recollections the name revived. "They called her Alice! Elsie or Alice; 'tis all the same. A laughing, playful child she was, when happy; and tender and weeping in her misery! Her hair was shining and yellow, as the coat of the young fawn, and her skin clearer than the purest water that drips from the rock. Well do I remember her! I remember her right well!"

The lip of the youth slightly curled, and he regarded the old man with an expression which might easily have been construed into a declaration that such were not his own recollections of his venerable and revered ancestor, though it would seem he did not think it necessary to say as much in words. He was content to answer:

"They both retained impressions of the dangers they had passed by, far too vivid easily to lose the recollection of any of their fellow-actors."

The trapper looked aside, and seemed to struggle with some deeply innate feeling; then, turning again toward his companion, though his honest eyes no longer dwelt with the same open interest as before, on the countenance of the other, he continued:

"Did he tell you of them *all*? Were they *all* red-skins, but himself and the daughters of Munroe?"

"No. There was a white man associated with the Delawares. A scout of the English army, but a native of the provinces."

"A drunken, worthless vagabond, like most of his color who harbor with the savages, I warrant you!"

"Old man, your gray hairs should caution you against slander. The man I speak of was of great simplicity of mind, but of sterling worth. Unlike most of those who live a border life, he united the better instead of the worst qualities of the two people. He was a man endowed with the choicest and perhaps rarest gift of Nature—that of distinguishing good from evil. His virtues were those of simplicity, because such were the fruits of his habits, as were indeed his very prejudices. In courage he was the equal of his red associates; in warlike skill, being better instructed, their superior. 'In short, he was a noble shoot from the stock of human nature which never could attain its proper elevation and importance for no other reason than because it grew in the forest;' such, old hunter, were the very words of my grandfather, when speaking of the man you imagine so worthless!"

The eyes of the trapper had sunk to the earth, as the stranger delivered this character in the ardent tones of generous youth. He played with the ears of his hound, fingered his own rustic garment, and opened and shut the pan of his rifle with hands that trembled in a manner that would have implied their total unfitness to wield the weapon. When the other had concluded, he hoarsely added:

"Your grand'ther didn't, then, entirely forget the white man?"

"So far from that, there are already three among us who have also names derived from that scout."

"A name, did you say?" exclaimed the old man, starting; "what, the name of the solitary, un'larned hunter? Do the great, and the rich, and the honored, and, what is better still, the just, do they bear his very, actual name?"

"It is borne by my brother, and by two of my cousins, whatever may be their titles to be described by the terms you have mentioned."

"Do you mean the actual name itself; spelt with the very same letters, beginning with an N and ending with an L?"

"Exactly the same," the youth smilingly replied. "No, no, we have forgotten nothing that was his. I have at this moment a dog brushing a deer, not far from this, who is come of a hound that very scout sent as a present after his friends, and which was of the stock he always used himself; a truer breed, in nose and foot, is not to be found in the wide Union."

"Hector!" said the old man, struggling to conquer an emotion that nearly suffocated him; and speaking to his hound in the sort of tones he would have used to a child, "do you hear that, pup! your kin and blood are in the prairies! A name—it is wonderful! very wonderful!"

Nature could endure no more. Overcome by a flood of unusual and extraordinary sensations, and stimulated by tender and long-dormant recollections, strangely and unexpectedly revived, the old man had just self-command enough to add, in a voice that was hollow and unnatural, through the efforts he made to command it:

"Boy, I am that scout; a warrior once, a miserable trapper now!" when the tears broke over his wasted cheeks, out of fountains that had long been dried, and sinking his face between his knees, he covered it decently with his buckskin garment, and sobbed aloud.

The spectacle produced correspondent emotions in his companions. Paul Hover had actually swallowed each syllable of the discourse as they fell alternately from the different speakers, his feelings keeping equal pace with the increasing interest of the scene. Unused to such strange sensations, he was turning his face on every side of him, to avoid he knew not what, until he saw the tears and heard the sobs of the old man, when he sprang to his feet, and grappling his guest fiercely by the throat, he demanded by what authority he had made his aged companion weep.

A flash of recollection crossing his brain at the same instant, he released his hold, and, stretching forth an arm in the very wantonness of gratification, he seized the doctor by the hair, which instantly revealed its artificial formation, by cleaving to his hand, leaving the white and shining poll of the naturalist with a covering no warmer than the skin.

"What think you of that, Mr. Bug-gatherer?" he rather shouted than cried; "is this not a strange bee to line into his hole?"

"'Tis remarkable! wonderful! edifying?" returned the lover of Nature, good-humoredly recovering his wig, with twinkling eyes and a husky voice. "'Tis rare and commendable! Though I doubt not in the exact order of causes and effects."

With this sudden outbreathing, however, the commotion instantly subsided, the three spectators clustering around the trapper with a species of awe at beholding the tears of one so aged.

"It must be so, or how could he be so familiar with a history that is little known beyond my own family," at length the youth observed, not ashamed to acknowledge how much he had been affected by unequivocally drying his own eyes.

"True!" echoed Paul; "if you want any more evidence I will swear to it! I know every word of it myself to be true as the gospel!"

"And yet we had long supposed him dead!" continued the soldier. "My grandfather had filled his days with honor, and he had believed himself the junior of the two."

"It is not often that youth has an opportunity of thus looking down on the weakness of age!" the trapper observed, raising his head, and looking around him with composure and dignity. "That I am still here, young man, is the pleasure of the Lord, who has spared me until I have seen fourscore long and laborious years, for his own secret ends. That I am the man I say, you need not doubt; for why should I go to my grave with so cheap a lie on my mouth?"

"I do not hesitate to believe; I only marvel that it should be so! But why

do I find you, venerable and excellent friend of my parents, in these wastes, so far from the comforts and safety of the lower country?"

"I have come into these plains to escape the sound of the ax; for here, surely, the chopper can never follow! But I may put the like question to yourself. Are you of the party which the States have sent into their new purchase, to look after the natur' of the bargain they have made?"

"I am not. Lewis is making his way up the river, some hundreds of miles from this. I come on a private adventure."

"Though it is no cause of wonder that a man whose strength and eyes have failed him as a hunter should be seen nigh the haunts of the beaver, using a trap instead of a rifle, it is strange that one so young and prosperous, and bearing the commission of the Great Father, should be moving among the prairies without even a camp-colorman to do his biddings!"

"You would think my reasons sufficient did you know them, as know them you shall, if you are disposed to listen to my story. I think you all honest, and men who would rather aid than betray one bent on a worthy object."

"Come, then, and tell us at your leisure," said the trapper, seating himself, and beckoning to the youth to follow his example. The latter willingly complied; and, after Paul and the doctor had disposed of themselves to their several likings, the new-comer entered into a narrative of the singular reasons which had led him so far into the deserts.

CHAPTER XI.

"So foul a sky clears not without a storm."

—KING JOHN.

IN the meantime the industrious and ir-reclaimable hours continued their labors. The sun, which had been struggling through such masses of vapor throughout the day fell slowly into a streak of clear sky, and thence sank gloriously into the gloomy wastes, as he is wont to settle into the waters of the ocean. The vast herds

which had been grazing among the wild pastures of the prairies gradually disappeared, and the endless flocks of aquatic birds that were pursuing their customary annual journey from the virgin lakes of the north toward the Gulf of Mexico, ceased to fan that air which had now become loaded with dew and vapor. In short, the shadows of night fell upon the rock, adding the mantle of darkness to the other dreary accomplishments of the place.

As the light began to fail Esther collected her younger children at her side, and placing herself on a projecting point of her insulated fortress, she sat patiently awaiting the return of the hunters. Ellen Wade was at no great distance, seeming to keep a little aloof from the anxious circle, as if willing to mark the distinction which existed in their characters.

"Your uncle is, and always will be, a dull calculator, Nell," observed the mother, after a long pause in a conversation that had turned on the labors of the day; "a lazy hand at figures and foreknowledge is that said Ishmael Bush! Here he sat lolloping about the rock from light till noon, doing nothing but scheme—scheme—scheme—with seven as noble boys at his elbows as woman ever gave to man; and what's the upshot? Why, night is setting in, and his needful work not yet ended."

"It is not prudent, certainly, aunt," Ellen replied, with a vacancy in her air that proved how little she knew what she was saying; "and it is setting a very bad example to his sons."

"Hoity toity, girl! who has reared you up as a judge over your elders, ay, and your betters, too! I should like to see the man on the whole frontier who sets a more honest example to his children than this same Ishmael Bush! Show me if you can, Miss Fault-finder, but not fault-mender, a set of boys who will, on occasion, sooner chop a piece of logging and dress it for the crop, than my own children; though I say it myself, who, perhaps, should be silent; or a cradler that knows better how to lead a gang of hands through a field of wheat, leaving a cleaner stubble in his track, than my own good

man! Then, as a father, he is as generous as a lord; for his sons have only to name the spot where they would like to pitch, and he gives 'em a deed of the plantation, and no charge for papers is ever made!"

As the wife of the squatter concluded, she raised a hollow, taunting laugh, that was echoed from the mouths of several juvenile imitators, whom she was training to a life as shiftless and lawless as her own; but which, notwithstanding its uncertainty, was not without its secret charms.

"Holloa! old Eester," shouted the well-known voice of her husband, from the plain beneath; "ar' you keeping your junkets, while we are finding you in venison and buffalo-beef? Come down—come down, old girl, with all your young, and lend us a hand to carry up the meat; why, what a frolic you ar' in, woman! Come down, come down, for the boys are at hand, and we have work here for double your number."

Ishmael might have spared his lungs more than a moiety of the effort they were compelled to make in order that he should be heard. He had hardly uttered the name of his wife, before the whole of the crouching circle rose in a body, and, tumbling over each other, they precipitated themselves down the dangerous passes of the rock with ungovernable impatience. Esther followed the young fry with a more measured gait; nor did Elien deem it wise, or rather discreet, to remain behind. Consequently the whole were soon assembled at the base of the citadel, on the open plain.

Here the squatter was found, staggering under the weight of a fine, fat buck, attended by one or two of his younger sons. Abiram quickly appeared, and before many minutes had elapsed, most of the hunters dropped in, singly and in pairs, each man bringing with him some fruits of his prowess in the field.

"The plain is free from red-skins, to-night, at least," said Ishmael, after the bustle of the reception had a little subsided; "for I have scoured the prairie for many long miles, on my own feet, and I

call myself a judge of the print of an Indian moccasin. So, old woman, you can give us a few steaks of the venison, and then we will sleep on the day's work."

"I'll not swear there are no savages near us," said Abiram. "I, too, know something of the trail of a red-skin; and, unless my eyes have lost some of their sight, I would swear boldly that there ar' Indians at hand. But wait till Asa comes in. He passed the spot where I found the marks, and the boy knows something of such matters, too."

"Ay, the boy knows too much of many things," returned Ishmael, gloomily. "It will be better for him when he thinks he knows less. But what matters it, Hetty, if all the Sioux tribes west of the big river are within a mile of us; they will find it no easy matter to scale this rock in the teeth of ten bold men."

"Call 'em twelve at once, Ishmael; call 'em twelve!" cried his termagant assistant. "For if your moth-gathering, bug-hunting friend can be counted a man, I beg you will set me down as two. I will not turn my back to him with the rifle or the shot-gun; and for courage! the yearling heifer, that them skulking devils the Tetons stole, was the biggest coward among us all, and after her came your driveling doctor. Ah! Ishmael, you rarely attempt a regular trade but you come out the loser; and this man, I reckon, is the hardest bargain among them all! Would you think it, the fellow ordered me a blister around my mouth, because I complained of a pain in the foot?"

"It is a pity, Esther," the husband coolly answered, "that you did not take it; I reckon that it would have done considerable good. But, boys, if it should turn out as Abiram thinks, that there are Indians near us, we may have to scamper up the rock, and lose our suppers, after all; therefore, we will make sure of the game, and talk over the performances of the doctor when we have nothing better to do."

The hint was taken; and in a few minutes the exposed situation in which the family was collected was exchanged for

the more secure elevation of the rock. Here Esther busied herself, working and scolding with equal industry, until the repast was prepared; when she summoned her husband to his meal in a voice as sonorous as that in which the inauum reminds the faithful of a more important duty.

When each had assumed his proper and customary place around the smoking viands, the squatter set the example by beginning to partake of a delicious venison steak, prepared like the hump of the bison, with a skill that rather increased than concealed its natural properties. A painter would gladly have seized the moment to transfer the wild and characteristic scene to the canvas.

The reader will remember that the citadel of Ishmael stood isolated, lofty, ragged, and nearly inaccessible. A bright, flashy fire that was burning on the center of its summit, and around which the busy group was clustered, lent it the appearance of some tall Pharos placed in the center of the deserts, to light such adventurers as wandered through their broad wastes. The flashing flame gleamed from one sunburnt countenance to another, exhibiting every variety of expression, from the juvenile simplicity of the children, mingled, as it was, with a shade of the wildness peculiar to their semi-barbarous lives, to the dull and immovable apathy that dwelt on the features of the squatter when unexcited. Occasionally a gust of wind would fan the embers; and, as a brighter light shot upward, the little solitary tent was seen as it were suspended in the gloom of the upper air. All beyond was enveloped, as usual at that hour, in an impenetrable body of darkness.

"It is unaccountable that Asa should choose to be out of the way at such a time as this," Esther pettishly observed. "When all is finished and to rights we shall have the boy coming up grumbling for his meal, and hungry as a bear after his winter's nap. His stomach is as true as the best clock in Kentucky, and seldom wants winding up to tell the time whether of day or night. A desperate eater is Asa, when a-hungered by a little work?"

Ishmael looked sternly around the circle of his silent sons, as if to see whether any among them would presume to say ought in favor of the absent delinquent. But now, when no exciting causes existed to rouse their slumbering tempers, it seemed to be too great an effort to enter on the defense of their rebellious brother. Abiram, however, who, since the pacification, either felt or affected to feel a more generous interest in his late adversary, saw fit to express an anxiety to which the others were strangers:

"It will be well if the boy escaped the Tetons!" he muttered. "I should be sorry to have Asa, who is one of the stoutest of our party, both in heart and hand, fall into the power of the red devils."

"Look to yourself, Abiram; and spare your breath, if you can use it only to frighten the woman and her huddling girls. You have whitened the face of Ellen Wade already; who looks as pale as if she was staring to-day at the very Indians you name, when I was forced to speak to her through the rifle because I couldn't reach her ears with my tongue. How was it, Nell? you have never given the reason of your deafness?"

The color of Ellen's cheek changed as suddenly as the squatter's piece had flashed on the occasion to which he alluded, the burning glow suffusing her features until it even mantled her throat with its fine, healthful tinge. She hung her head, abashed, but did not think it needful to reply.

Ishmael, too sluggish to pursue the subject, or content with the pointed allusion he had just made, rose from his seat on the rock, and stretching his heavy frame, like a well-fed and fattened ox, he announced his intention to sleep. Among a race who lived chiefly for the indulgence of the natural wants, such a declaration could not fail of meeting with sympathetic dispositions. One after another disappeared, each seeking his or her rude dormitory; and, before many minutes, Esther, who by this time had scolded the younger fry to sleep, found herself, if we except the usual

watchman below, in solitary possession of the naked rock.

Whatever less valuable fruits had been produced in this uneducated woman by her migratory habits, the great principle of female nature was too deeply rooted ever to be entirely eradicated. Of a powerful, not to say fierce, temperament, her passions were violent and difficult to be smothered. But, however she might and did abuse the accidental prerogatives of her situation, love for her offspring, while it often slumbered, could never be said to become extinct. She liked not the protracted absence of Asa. Too fearless herself to have hesitated an instant on her own account about crossing the dark abyss, into which she now sat looking with longing eyes, her busy imagination, in obedience to this inextinguishable sentiment, began to conjure nameless evils on account of her son. It might be true, as Abiram had hinted, that he had become a captive to some of the tribes who were hunting the buffalo in that vicinity, or even a still more dreadful calamity might have befallen. So thought the mother, while silence and darkness lent their aid to the secret impulses of nature.

Agitated by these reflections, which put sleep at defiance, Esther continued at her post, listening with that sort of acuteness which is termed instinct in the animals a few degrees below her in the scale of intelligence, for any of those noises which might indicate the approach of footsteps. At length, her wishes had an appearance of being realized; for the long-desired sounds were distinctly audible, and presently she distinguished the dim form of a man at the base of the rock.

"Now Asa, richly do you deserve to be left with an earthen bed this blessed night!" the woman began to mutter, with a revolution in her feelings that will not be surprising to those who have made the contradictions that give variety to the human character a study. "And a hard one I've a mind it shall be! Why, Abner! Abner; you Abner! do you sleep? Let me not see you dare to open the hole till I get down. I will know who it is that

wishes to disturb a peaceable, ay, and an honest family, too, at such a time in the night as this!"

"Woman!" exclaimed a voice, that intended to bluster, while the speaker was manifestly a little apprehensive of the consequences—"woman, I forbid you on pain of the law to project any of your infernal missiles. I am a citizen, and a freeholder, and a graduate of two universities; and I stand upon my rights! Beware of malice prepense, of chance-medley, and of manslaughter. It is I—your *amicus*; a friend and inmate. I—Dr. Obed Battius."

"Who?" demanded Esther, in a voice that nearly refused to convey her words to the ears of the anxious listener beneath. "Did you say it was not Asa?"

"Nay, I am neither Asa nor Absalom, nor any of the Hebrew princes, but Obed, the root and stock of them all. Have I not said, woman, that you keep one in attendance who is entitled to a peaceful as well as an honorable admission? Do you take me for an animal of the class amphibia, and that I can play with my lungs as a blacksmith does with his bellows?"

The naturalist might have expended his breath much longer without producing any desirable result, had Esther been his only auditor. Disappointed and alarmed the woman had already sought her pallet, and was already preparing, with a sort of desperate indifference, to compose herself to sleep. Abner, the sentinel below, however, had been aroused from an exceedingly equivocal situation by the outcry; and as he had now regained sufficient consciousness to recognize the voice of the physician, the latter was admitted with the least possible delay. Dr. Battius bustled through the narrow entrance with an air of singular impatience, and was already beginning to mount the difficult ascent, when catching a view of the porter he paused to observe, with an air that he intended should be impressively admonitory:

"Abner, there are dangerous symptoms of somnolency about thee! It is sufficiently exhibited in the tendency to hiation, and may prove dangerous not

only to yourself, but to all thy father's family."

"You never made a greater mistake, doctor," returned the youth, gaping like an indolent lion; "I haven't a symptom, as you call it, about any part of me; and as to father and the children, I reckon the small-pox and the measles have been thoroughly through the breed these many months ago."

Content with his brief admonition, the naturalist had surmounted half the difficulties of the ascent before the deliberate Abner ended his justification. On the summit, Obed fully expected to encounter Esther, of whose linguacious powers he had too often been furnished with the most sinister proofs, and of which he stood in an awe too salutary to covet a repetition of the attacks. The reader can foresee that he was to be agreeably disappointed. Treading lightly, and looking timidly over his shoulder, as if he apprehended a shower of something even more formidable than words, the doctor proceeded to the place which had been allotted to himself in the general disposition of the dormitories.

Instead of sleeping the worthy naturalist sat ruminating over what he had both seen and heard that day, until the tossing and mutterings which proceeded from the cabin of Esther, who was his nearest neighbor, advertised him of the wakeful situation of its inmate. Perceiving the necessity of doing something to disarm this female Cerberus, before his own purpose could be accomplished, the doctor, reluctant as he was to encounter her tongue, found himself compelled to invite a colloquial communication.

"You appear not to sleep, my very kind and worthy Mrs. Bush," he said, determined to commence his applications with a plaster that was usually found to adhere; "you appear to rest badly, my excellent hostess; can I administer to your ailments?"

"What would you give me, man?" grumbled Esther; "a blister to make me sleep?"

"Say rather a cataplasm. But if you are in pain, here are some cordial drops

which, taken in a glass of my own cognac, will give you rest, if I know aught of the *materia medica*."

The doctor, as he very well knew, had assailed Esther on her weak side; and, as he doubted not of the acceptable quality of his prescription, he set himself at work without unnecessary delay, to prepare it. When he made his offering, it was received in a snappish and threatening manner, but swallowed with a facility that sufficiently proclaimed how much it was relished. The woman muttered her thanks, and her leech reseated himself in silence, to await the operation of the dose. In less than half an hour the breathing of Esther became so profound, and, as the doctor himself might have termed it, so very abstracted, that, had he not known how easy it was to ascribe this new instance of somnolency to the powerful dose of opium with which he had garnished the brandy, he might have seen reason to distrust his own prescription. With the sleep of the restless woman, the stillness became profound and general.

Then Dr. Battius saw fit to arise, with the silence and caution of the midnight robber, and to steal out of his own cabin, or rather kennel, for it deserves no better name, toward the adjoining dormitories. Here he took time to assure himself that all his neighbors were buried in deep sleep. Once advised of this important fact, he hesitated no longer, but commenced the difficult ascent which led to the pinnacle of the rock. His advance, though abundantly guarded, was not entirely noiseless; but while he was felicitating himself on having successfully effected his object, and he was in the very act of placing his foot on the highest ledge, a hand was laid upon the skirts of his coat, which as effectually put an end to his advance as if the gigantic strength of Ishmael himself had pinned him to the earth.

"Is there sickness in the tent," whispered a soft voice in his very ear, "that Dr. Battius is called to visit it at such an hour?"

So soon as the heart of the naturalist had returned from its hasty expedition into his throat, as one less skilled than

Dr. Battius in the formation of the animal would have been apt to have accounted for the extraordinary sensation with which he received this unlooked-for interruption, he found resolution to reply; using, as much in terror as in prudence, the same precaution in the indulgence of his voice.

"My worthy Nelly! I am greatly rejoiced to find it is no other than thee. Hist, child, hist! Should Ishmael gain a knowledge of our plans, he would not hesitate to cast us both from this rock, upon the plain beneath. Hist, Nelly, hist!"

As the doctor delivered his injunctions between the intervals of his ascent, by the time they were concluded, both he and his auditor had gained the upper level.

"And now, Dr. Battius," the girl gravely demanded, "may I know the reason why you have run so great a risk of flying from this place without wings, and at the certain expense of your neck?"

"Nothing shall be concealed from thee, worthy and trusty Nelly—but are you certain that Ishmael will not awake?"

"No fear of him; he will sleep until the sun scorches his eyelids. The danger is from my aunt."

"Esther sleepeth!" the doctor sententiously replied. "Ellen you have been watching on this rock to-day?"

"I was ordered to do so."

"And you have seen the bison, and the antelope, and the wolf, and the deer, as usual; animals of the orders *Pecora*, *Pel-lula*, and *Fera*."

"I have seen the creatures you have named in English, but I know nothing of the Indian languages."

"There is still an *order* that I have not named, which you have also seen. The *primates*—is it not true?"

"I cannot say, I know no animal by that name."

"Nay, Ellen, you confer with a friend. Of the *genus Homo*, child?"

"Whatever else I may have had in view, I have not seen the *Vespertilio horribi*—"

"Hush, Nellie, thy vivacity will betray us! Tell me, girl, have you not seen cer-

tain *bipeds*, called *men*, wandering about the prairies?"

"Surely. My uncle and his sons have been hunting the buffalo, since the sun began to fall."

"I must speak in the vernacular, to be comprehended. Ellen, I would say of the *species Kentucky*."

Though Ellen reddened like the rose, her blushes were concealed by the darkness. She hesitated an instant, and then summoned sufficient spirit to say decidedly:

"If you wish to speak in parables, Dr. Battius, you must find another listener. Put your questions plainly in English, and I will answer them honestly in the same tongue."

"I have been journeying in this desert, as thou knowest, Nelly, in quest of animals that have been hidden from the eyes of science until now. Among others, I have discovered a *primates*, the *genus Homo*; *species Kentucky*, which I term Paul—"

"Hist, for the sake of mercy!" said Ellen; "speak lower, doctor, or we shall be ruined."

"Hover; by profession a collector of the *apes*, or bee," continued the other. "Do I use the vernacular now—am I understood?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," returned the girl, breathing with difficulty, in her surprise. "But what of him? did he tell you to mount this rock?—he knows nothing, himself; for the oath I gave my uncle has shut my mouth."

"Ay, but there is one that has taken no oath, who has revealed all. I would that the mantle which is wrapped around the mysteries of Nature were as effectually withdrawn from its hidden treasures! Ellen! Ellen! the man with whom I have unwittingly formed a compactum, or agreement, is sadly forgetful of the obligations of honesty! Thy uncle, child."

"You mean Ishmael Bush, my father's brother's widow's husband," returned the offended girl, a little proudly. "Indeed, indeed, it is cruel to reproach me with a tie that chance has formed, and which I would rejoice so much to break forever!"

The humble Ellen could utter no more, but, sinking on a projection of the rock, she began to sob in a manner that rendered their situation doubly critical. The doctor muttered a few words, which he intended as an apologetic explanation, but, before he had time to complete his labored vindication, she arose and said with decision :

"I did not come here to pass my time in foolish tears, nor you to try to stop them. What then has brought you thither?"

"I must see the inmate of that tent."

"You know what it contains?"

"I am taught to believe I do; and I bear a letter which I must deliver with my own hands. If the animal prove a quadruped, Ishmael is a true man—if a biped, fledged or unfledged, I care not, he is false, and our compactum at an end!"

Ellen made a sign for the doctor to remain where he was, and to be silent. She then glided into the tent, where she continued many minutes, that proved exceedingly weary and anxious to the expectant without; but, the instant she returned, she took him by the arm, and together they entered beneath the folds of the mysterious cloth.

CHAPTER XII.

"Pray God the Duke of York excuse himself!"

—KING HENRY VI.

THE mustering of the borderers on the following morning was silent, sullen, and gloomy. The repast of that hour was wanting in the inharmonious accompaniment with which Esther ordinarily enlivened their meals; for the effects of the powerful opiate the doctor had administered still muddled her intellect. The young men brooded over the absence of their elder brother; and the brows of Ishmael himself were knit, as he cast his scowling eyes from one to the other, like a man preparing to meet and to repel an expected assault on his authority. In the midst of this family distrust, Ellen and her midnight confederate, the natur-

alist, took their usual place among the children, without awakening suspicion or exciting comment. The only apparent fruits of the adventure in which they had been engaged were occasional upliftings of the eyes, on the part of the doctor, which were mistaken by the observers for some of his scientific contemplations of the heavens, but which in reality were no other than furtive glances at the fluttering walls of the proscribed tent.

At length the squatter, who had waited in vain for some decided manifestation of the expected rising among his sons, resolved to make a demonstration of his own intentions.

"Asa shall account to me for his undutiful conduct," he observed. "Here has the livelong night gone by, and he outlying on the prairie, when his hand and his rifle might both have been wanted in a brush with the Sioux, for any right he had to know the contrary."

"Spare your breath, good man," retorted his wife; "be saving your breath; for you may have to call long enough for the boy before he will answer!"

"It ar' a fact that some men be so womanish as to let the young master the old! But you, old Eester, should know better to think such will ever be the nature of things in the family of Ishmael Bush."

"Ah! you are a hectorer with the boys when need calls! I know it well, Ishmael; and one of your sons have you driven from you by your temper; and that, too, at a time when he is most wanted."

"Father," said Abner, whose sluggish nature had gradually been stimulating itself to the exertion of taking so bold a stand, "the boys and I have pretty generally concluded to go out on the search of Asa. We are disagreeable about his camping on the prairie, instead of coming into his own bed, as we all know he would like to do."

"Pshaw!" muttered Abiram, "the boy has killed a buck; or perhaps a buffalo; and he is sleeping by the carcass to keep off the wolves till day; we shall soon see him, or hear him bawling for help to bring in his load."

"'Tis little help that a son of mine will call for, to shoulder a buck or to quarter your wild beef," returned the mother. "And you, Abiram, to say so uncertain a thing! you who said yourself that the red-skins had been prowling around this place no later than yesterday——"

"I!" exclaimed her brother hastily, as if anxious to retract an error; "I said it then, and I say it now; and so you will find it to be. The Tetons are in our neighborhood, and happy will it prove for the boy if he is well shut of them."

"It seems to me," said Dr. Battius, speaking with the sort of deliberation and dignity one is apt to use after having thoroughly ripened his opinions by sufficient reflection—"it seems to me—a man but little skilled in the signs and tokens of Indian warfare, especially as practiced in these remote plains, but one who, I may say without vanity, has some insight into the mysteries of Nature—it seems, then, to me, thus humbly qualified, that when doubts exist in a matter of moment, it would always be the wisest course to appease them."

"No more of your doctoring for me!" cried the grum Esther; "no more quiddities in a healthy family, say I. Here was I doing well, only a little out of sorts with over-instructing the young, and you dosed me with a drug that hangs about my tongue like a pound-weight on a humming-bird's wing!"

"Is the medicine out?" dryly demanded Ishmael; "it must be a rare dose that gives a heavy feel to the tongue of old Eester!"

"Friend," continued the doctor, waving his hand for the angry wife to maintain the peace, "that it cannot perform all that is said of it the very charge of good Mrs. Bush is a sufficient proof. But to speak of the absent Asa. There is doubt as to his fate, and there is a proposition to solve it. Now, in the natural sciences truth is always a desideratum; and I confess it would seem to be equally so in the present case of domestic uncertainty, which may be called a vacuum, where, according to the laws of physic,

there should exist some pretty palpable proofs of materiality."

"Don't mind him, don't mind him," cried Esther, observing that the rest of his auditors listened with an attention which might proceed equally from acquiescence in his proposal, or ignorance of its meaning. "There is a drug in every word he utters."

"Dr. Battius wishes to say," Ellen modestly interposed, "that as some of us think Asa is in danger, and some think otherwise, the whole family might pass an hour or two in looking for him."

"Does he?" interrupted the woman; "then Dr. Battius has more sense in him than I believed! She is right, Ishmael; and what she says shall be done. I will shoulder a rifle myself, and woe betide the red-skin that crosses my path! I have pulled a trigger before to-day; ay, and heard an Indian yell, too, to my sorrow."

The spirit of Esther diffused itself, like the stimulus which attends a war-cry, among her sons. They arose in a body, and declared their determination to second so bold a resolution. Ishmael prudently yielded to an impulse he could not resist, and in a few minutes the woman appeared shouldering her arms, prepared to lead forth in person such of her descendants as chose to follow.

"Let them stay with the children that please," she said, "and them follow me who are not chicken-hearted!"

"Abiram, it will not do to leave the huts without some guard," Ishmael whispered, glancing his eye upward.

The man whom he addressed started, and betrayed extraordinary eagerness in his reply.

"I will tarry and watch the camp."

A dozen voices were instantly raised in objection to this proposal. He was wanted to point out the places where the hostile tracks had been seen, and his termagant sister openly scouted at the idea, as unworthy of his manhood. The reluctant Abiram was compelled to yield, and Ishmael made a new disposition for the defense of the place; which was admitted by every one to be all-important to their security and comfort.

He offered the post of commandant to Dr. Battius, who, however, peremptorily and somewhat haughtily declined the doubtful honor, exchanging looks of intelligence with Ellen as he did so. In this dilemma the squatter was obliged to constitute the girl herself castellan, taking care, however, in deputing this important trust, to omit no words of caution and instruction. When this preliminary point was settled the young men proceeded to arrange certain means of defense and signals of alarm that were adapted to the weakness and character of the garrison. Several masses of rocks were drawn to the edge of the upper level, and so placed as to leave it at the discretion of the feeble Ellen and her associates to cast them or not, as they might choose, on the heads of any invaders, who would of necessity be obliged to mount the eminence by the difficult and narrow passage already so often mentioned. In addition to this formidable obstruction, the barriers were strengthened and rendered nearly impassable. Smaller missiles that might be hurled even by the hands of the younger children, but which would prove, from the elevation of the place, exceeding dangerous, were provided in profusion. A pile of dried leaves and splinters was placed, as a beacon, on the upper rock, and then, even in the jealous judgment of the squatter, the post was deemed competent to maintain a creditable siege.

The moment the rock was thought to be in a state of sufficient security the party who composed what might be called the sortie sallied forth on their anxious expedition. The advance was led by Esther in person, who, attired in a dress half masculine, and bearing a weapon like the rest, seemed no unfit leader for the group of wildly-clad frontier-men that followed in her rear.

"Now, Abiram!" cried the Amazon, in a voice that was cracked and harsh, for the simple reason of being used too often on a strained and unnatural key, "now, Abiram, run with your nose low; show yourself a hound of the true breed, and do some credit to your training. You it was that saw the prints of the Indian moccas-

sin, and it behooves you to let others be as wise as yourself. Come; come to the front, man, and give us a bold lead."

The brother, who appeared at all times to stand in awe of his sister's authority, complied; though it was with a reluctance so evident as to excite sneers even among the unobservant and indolent sons of the squatter. Ishmael, himself, moved among his tall children like one who expected nothing from the search, and who was indifferent alike to its success or failure. In this manner the party proceeded until their distant fortress had sunk so low as to present an object no larger nor more distinct than a hazy point on the margin of the prairie. Hitherto their progress had been silent and somewhat rapid, for as swell after swell was mounted and passed, without varying, or discovering a living object to enliven the monotony of the view, even the tongue of Esther was hushed to increasing anxiety. Here, however, Ishmael chose to pause, and casting the butt of his rifle from his shoulder to the ground, he observed:

"This is enough. Buffalo-signs and deer-signs are plenty; but where are thy Indian footsteps, Abiram?"

"Still farther west," returned the other, pointing in the direction he named. "This was the spot where I struck the tracks of the buck; it was after I took the deer that I fell upon the Teton trail."

"And a bloody piece of work you made of it, man," cried the squatter, pointing tauntingly to the soiled garments of his kinsman, and then directing the attention of the spectators to his own, by the way of a triumphant contrast. "Here have I cut the throats of two lively does, and a scampering fawn, without spot or stain; while you, blundering dog that you are, have made as much work for Eester and her girls, as though butchering was your regular calling. Come, boys—it is enough. I am too old not to know the signs of the frontiers; no Indian has been here since the last fall of water. Follow me; and I will make a turn that shall give us at least the beef of a fallow cow for our trouble."

"Follow me!" echoed Esther, stepping

undauntedly forward. "I am leader to-day, and I *will* be followed. Who so proper, let me know, as a mother, to lead a search for her own lost child?"

Ishmael regarded his intractable mate with a smile of indulgent pity. Observing that she had already struck out a path for herself, different both from that of Abiram and the one he had seen fit to choose, and, being unwilling to draw the cord of authority too tight just at that moment, he submitted to her will. But Dr. Battius, who had hitherto been a silent and thoughtful attendant on the woman, now saw fit to raise his feeble voice in the way of remonstrance.

"I agree with thy partner in life, worthy and gentle Mrs. Bush," he said, "in believing that some *ignis fatuus* of the imagination has deceived Abiram, in the signs or symptoms of which he has spoken."

"Symptoms, yourself!" interrupted the termagant. "This is no time for bookish words, nor is this a place to stop and swallow medicines. If you are a-leg-weary, say so, as a plain-speaking man should; then seat yourself on the prairie, like a hound that is foot-sore, and take your natural rest."

"I accord with your opinion," the naturalist calmly replied, complying literally with the opinion of the deriding Esther, by taking his seat very coolly by the side of an indigenous shrub, the examination of which he commenced on the instant, in order that science might not lose any of its just and important dues. "I honor your excellent advice, Mistress Esther, as you may perceive. Go thou in quest of thy offspring, while I tarry here, in pursuit of that which is better, viz., an insight into the arcana of Nature's volume."

The woman answered with a hollow, unnatural, and scornful laugh; and even her heavy sons, as they slowly passed the seat of the already abstracted naturalist, did not disdain to manifest their contempt in smiles. In a few minutes the train mounted the nearest eminence, and, as it turned the rounded acclivity, the doctor was left to pursue his profitable investigation in entire solitude.

Another half-hour passed, during which Esther continued to advance on her seemingly fruitless search. Her pauses, however, were becoming frequent, and her looks wandering and uncertain, when footsteps were heard clattering through the bottom, and at the next instant a buck was seen to bound up the ascent, and to dart from before their eyes in the direction of the naturalist. So sudden and unlooked for had been the passage of the animal, and so much had he been favored by the shape of the ground that, before any one of the foresters had time to bring his rifle to his shoulder, it was already beyond the range of a bullet.

"Look out for the wolf!" shouted Abner, shaking his head in vexation, at being a single moment too late. "A wolf's skin will be no bad gift in a winter's night; ay, yonder the hungry devil comes!"

"Hold!" cried Ishmael, knocking up the leveled weapon of his too eager son. "'Tis not a wolf, but a hound of thorough blood and bottom. Ha! we have hunters nigh; there ar' two of them."

He was still speaking, when the animals in question came leaping on the track of the deer, striving with noble ardor to outdo each other. One was an aged dog, whose strength seemed to be sustained purely by generous emulation, and the other a pup, that gamboled even while he pressed most warmly on the chase. They both ran, however, with clean and powerful leaps, carrying their noses high, like animals of the most keen and subtle scent. They had passed; and in another minute they would have been running open-mouthed with the deer in view, had not the young dog suddenly bounded from the course, and uttered a cry of surprise. His aged companion stopped also, and returned panting and exhausted to the place where the other was whirling around in swift and apparently in mad evolutions, circling the spot in his own footsteps, and continuing his outcry in a short, snappish barking. But, when the elder hound had reached the spot he seated himself and, lifting his nose high into the air, he raised a long, loud, and wailing howl.

"It must be a strong scent," said Abner, who had been, with the rest of the family, an admiring observer of the movements of the dogs, "that can break off two such creatur's so suddenly from their trail."

"Murder them!" cried Abiram; "I'll swear to the old hound; 'tis the dog of the trapper, whom we now know to be our mortal enemy."

Though the brother of Esther gave so hostile advice, he appeared in no way ready to put it in execution himself. The surprise which had taken possession of the whole party, exhibited itself in his own vacant, wondering stare, as strongly as in any of the admiring visages by whom he was surrounded. His denunciation, therefore, notwithstanding its dire import, was disregarded; and the dogs were left to obey the impulses of their mysterious instinct, without let or hindrance.

It was long before any of the spectators broke the silence; but the squatter at length so far recollected his authority as to take on himself the right to control the movements of his children.

"Come away, boys; come away and leave the hounds to sing their tunes for their own amusement," Ishmael said, in his coldest manner. "I scorn to take the life of a beast because its master has pitched himself too nigh my clearing; come away, boys, come away; we have enough of our own work before us, without turning aside to do that of the whole neighborhood."

"Come *not* away!" cried Esther, in tones that sounded like the admonitions of some sibyl. "I say come *not* away, my children. There is a meaning and a warning in this; and as I am a woman and a mother, will I know the truth of it all."

So saying, the awakened wife brandished her weapon, with an air that was not without its wild and secret influence, and led the way toward the spot where the dogs still remained, filling the air with their long-drawn and piteous complaints. The whole party followed in her steps, some too indolent to oppose, others obedient to her will, and all more or less

excited by the uncommon character of the scene.

"Tell me, you, Abner—Abiram—Ishmael!" the woman cried, standing over a spot where the earth was trampled and beaten, and plainly sprinkled with blood, "tell me, you who ar' hunters! what sort of animal has here met his death?—Speak! Ye ar' men, and used to the signs of the plains; is it the blood of wolf or panther?"

"A buffalo—and a noble and powerful creatur' has it been," returned the squatter, who looked down calmly on the fatal signs which so strangely affected his wife. "Here are the marks of the spot where he has struck his hoofs into the earth, in the death struggle, and yonder he has plunged and torn the ground with his horns. Ay, a buffalo-bull of wonderful strength and courage has he been!"

"And who has slain him?" continued Esther; "man, where are the offals?—Wolves!—They devour not the hide! Tell me, ye men and hunters, is this the blood of a beast?"

"The creatur' has plunged over the hillock," said Abner, who had proceeded a short distance beyond the rest of the party. "Ah! there you will find it, in yon swale of alders. Look! a thousand carrion-birds ar' hovering above the carcass."

"The animal has still life in him," returned the squatter, "or the buzzards would settle upon their prey! By the action of the dogs it must be something ravenous; I reckon it is the white bear from the upper falls. They are said to cling desperately to life!"

"Let us go back," said Abiram; "there may be danger, and there can be no good in attacking a ravenous beast. Remember, Ishmael, 'twill be a risky job, and one of small profit!"

The young men smiled at this new proof of the well-known pusillanimity of their uncle. The oldest even proceeded so far as to express his contempt, by bluntly saying:

"It will do to cage with the other animal we carry; then we may go back double-handed into the settlements, and

set up for showmen, around the court-houses and jails of Kentucky."

The threatening frown which gathered on the brow of his father admonished the young man to forbear. Exchanging looks that were half rebellious with his brethren, he saw fit to be silent. But instead of observing the caution recommended by Abiram, they proceeded in a body, until they again came to a halt within a few yards of the matted cover of the thicket.

The scene had now, indeed, become wild and striking enough to have produced a powerful effect on minds better prepared, than those of the unnurtured family of the squatter, to resist the impressions of so exciting a spectacle. The heavens were, as usual at the season, covered with dark, driving clouds, beneath which interminable flocks of aquatic birds were again on the wing, holding their toilsome and heavy way toward the distant waters of the South. The wind had risen, and was once more sweeping over the prairie in gusts, which it was often vain to oppose; and then again the blasts would seem to mount into the upper air, as if to sport with the drifting vapor, whirling and rolling vast masses of the dusky and ragged volumes over each other, in a terrific and yet grand disorder. Above the little brake, the flocks of birds still held their flight, circling with heavy wings about the spot, struggling at times against the torrent of wind, and then, favored by their position and height, making bold swoops upon the thicket, away from which, however, they never failed to sail, screaming in terror, as if apprised, either by sight or instinct, that the hour of their voracious dominion had not yet fully arrived.

Ishmael stood for many minutes, with his wife and children clustered together, in an amazement, with which awe was singularly mingled, gazing in death-like stillness on the sight. The voice of Esther at length broke the charm, and reminded the spectators of the necessity of resolving their doubts in some manner more worthy of their manhood than by dull and inactive observation.

"Call in the dogs!" she said; "call in the hounds and put them into the thicket;

there ar' men enough of ye, if ye have not lost the spirit with which I know ye were born, to tame the tempers of all the bears west of the big river. Call in the dogs, I say, you Enoch! Abner! Gabriel! has wonder made ye deaf?"

One of the young men complied; and having succeeded in detaching the hounds from the place, around which until then they had not ceased to hover, he led them down to the margin of the thicket.

"Put them in, boy; put them in," continued the woman; "and you, Ishmael and Abiram, if anything wicked or hurtful comes forth show them the use of your rifles, like frontier-men. If ye ar' wanting in spirit, before the eyes of my children I will put ye both to shame!"

The youths who, until now, had detained the hounds, let slip the thongs of skin by which they had been held, and urged them to the attack with their voices. But it would seem that the elder dog was restrained by some extraordinary sensation, or that he was much too experienced to attempt the rash adventure. After proceeding a few yards to the verge of the brake, he made a sudden pause and stood trembling in all his aged limbs, apparently as unable to recede as to advance. The encouraging calls of the young men were disregarded, or only answered by a low and plaintive whining. For a minute the pup also was similarly affected; but less sage, or more easily excited, he was induced at length to leap forward, and finally to dash into the cover. An alarmed and startling howl was heard, and at the next minute he broke out of the thicket and commenced circling the spot in the same wild and unsteady manner as before.

"Have I a man among my children?" demanded Esther. "Give me a truer piece than a childish shot-gun, and I will show ye what the courage of a frontier-woman can do!"

"Stay, mother," exclaimed Abner and Enoch; "if you *will* see the creatur', let *us* drive it into view."

This was quite as much as the youths were accustomed to utter, even on more important occasions; but, having given a

pledge of their intentions, they were far from being backward in redeeming it. Preparing their arms with the utmost care, they advanced with steadiness to the brake. Nerves less often tried than those of the young borderers might have shrunk before the dangers of so uncertain an undertaking. As they proceeded, the howls of the dogs became more shrill and plaintive. The vultures and buzzards settled so low as to flap the bushes with their heavy wings, and the wind came hoarsely sweeping along the naked prairie, as if the spirits of the air had also descended to witness the approaching development.

There was a breathless moment, when the blood of the undaunted Esther flowed backward to her heart, as she saw her sons push aside the matted branches of the thicket, and bury themselves in its labyrinth. A deep and solemn pause succeeded. Then arose two loud and piercing cries, in quick succession, which were followed by a quiet still more awful and appalling.

"Come back, come back, my children!" cried the woman, the feeling of a mother getting the ascendancy.

But her voice was hushed, and every faculty seemed frozen with horror, as at that instant the bushes once more parted, and the two adventurers reappeared, pale and nearly insensible themselves, and laid at her feet the stiff and motionless body of the lost Asa, with the marks of a violent death but too plainly stamped on every pallid lineament.

The dogs uttered a long and closing howl, and then, breaking off together, they disappeared on the forsaken trail of the deer. The flight of birds wheeled upward into the heavens, filling the air with their complaints at having been robbed of a victim which, frightful and disgusting as it was, still bore too much of the impression of humanity to become the prey of their obscene appetites.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A pickaxe, and a spade, a spade,
For—and a shrouding sheet;
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet."

—SONG IN HAMLET.

"STAND back! stand off the whole of ye!" said Esther, hoarsely, to the crowd, which pressed too closely on the corpse; "I am his mother, and my right is better than that of ye all! Who has done this? Tell me, Ishmael, Abiram, Abner! open your mouths and your hearts, and let God's truth and no other issue from them. Who has done this bloody deed?"

Her husband made no reply, but stood, leaning on his rifle, looking sadly, but with an unaltered eye, at the mangled remains of his son. Not so the mother; she threw herself on the earth, and, receiving the cold and ghastly head into her lap, she sat contemplating those muscular features, on which the death-agony was still horribly impressed, in a silence far more expressive than any language of lamentation could have proved.

The voice of the woman was frozen in grief. In vain Ishmael attempted a few words of rude consolation; she neither listened nor answered. Her sons gathered about her in a circle, and expressed, after their uncouth manner, their sympathy in her sorrow, as well as their sense of their own loss; but she motioned them away, impatiently, with her hand. At times her fingers played in the matted hair of the dead, and at others they lightly attempted to smooth the painfully expressive muscles of its ghastly visage, as the hand of the mother is seen lingering fondly about the features of her sleeping child. Then, starting from their revolting office, her hands would flutter around her, and seem to seek some fruitless remedy against the violent blow which had thus suddenly destroyed the child in whom she had not only placed her greatest hopes, but so much of her maternal pride. While engaged in the latter incomprehensible manner, the lethargic Abner turned aside, and swallowing the unwonted emotions which were rising in his own throat, he observed:

"Mother means that we should look for the signs, that we may know in what manner Asa has come by his end."

"We owe it to the accursed Sioux!" answered Ishmael; "twice have they put me deeply in their debt! The third time the score shall be cleared!"

But, not content with this plausible explanation, and perhaps secretly glad to avert their eyes from a spectacle which awakened so extraordinary and unusual sensations in their sluggish bosoms, the sons of the squatter turned away in a body from their mother and the corpse, and proceeded to make the inquiries which they fancied the former had so repeatedly demanded. Ishmael made no objections; but, though he accompanied his children while they proceeded in the investigation, it was more with the appearance of complying with their wishes, at a time when resistance might not be seemly, than with any visible interest in the result. As the borderers, notwithstanding their usual dullness, were well instructed in most things connected with their habits of life, an inquiry, the success of which depended so much on signs and evidences that bore so strong a resemblance to a forest-trail, was likely to be conducted with skill and acuteness. Accordingly, they proceeded to the melancholy task with great readiness and intelligence.

Abner and Enoch agreed in their accounts as to the position in which they had found the body. It was seated nearly upright, the back supported by a mass of matted brush, and one hand still grasping a broken twig of the alders. It was most probably owing to the former circumstance that the body had escaped the rapacity of the carrion-birds which had been seen hovering above the thicket, and the latter proved that life had not yet entirely abandoned the hapless victim when he entered the brake. The opinion now became general that the youth had received his death-wound in the open prairie, and had dragged his enfeebled form into the cover of the thicket for the purpose of concealment. A trail through the bushes confirmed this opinion. It also appeared, on examination, that a desperate struggle

had taken place on the very margin of the thicket. This was sufficiently apparent by the trodden branches, the deep impressions on the moist ground, and the lavish flow of blood.

"He has been shot in the open ground and come here for a cover," said Abiram; "these marks would clearly prove it. The boy has been set upon by the savages in a body, and has fought like a hero as he was, until they have mastered his strength, and then drawn him to the bushes."

To this probable opinion there was now but one dissenting voice, that of the slow-minded Ishmael, who demanded that the corpse itself should be examined in order to obtain a more accurate knowledge of its injuries. On examination it appeared that a rifle-bullet had passed directly through the body of the deceased, entering beneath one of his brawny shoulders, and making its exit by the breast. It required some knowledge in gunshot-wounds to decide this delicate point, but the experience of the borderers was quite equal to the scrutiny; and a smile of wild and certainly of singular satisfaction passed among the sons of Ishmael, when Abner confidently announced that the enemies of Asa had assailed him in the rear.

"It must be so," said the gloomy but attentive squatter. "He was of too good a stock, and too well trained, knowingly to turn the weak side to man or beast! Remember, boys, that while the front of manhood is to your enemy, let him be who or what he may, you are safe from cowardly surprise. Why, Eester, woman! you are getting beside yourself with picking at the hair and garments of the child. Little good can you do him now, old girl."

"See," interrupted Enoch, extricating from the fragments of cloth the morsel of lead which had prostrated the strength of one so powerful; "here is the very bullet!"

Ishmael took it in his hand and eyed it long and closely.

"There's no mistake," at length he muttered, through his compressed teeth. "It is from the pouch of that accursed trapper. Like many of the hunters, he

has a mark in his mold, in order to know the work his rifle performs; and here you see it plainly—six little holes laid cross-ways.”

“I’ll swear to it,” cried Abiram, triumphantly. “He showed me his private mark himself, and boasted of the number of deer he had laid upon the prairies with these very bullets. Now, Ishmael, will you believe me when I tell you the old knave is a spy of the red-skins?”

The lead passed from the hand of one to that of another; and, unfortunately for the reputation of the old man, several among them remembered also to have seen the aforesaid private bullet marks during the curious examination which all had made of his accoutrements. In addition to this wound, however, were many others of a less dangerous nature, all of which were deemed to confirm the supposed guilt of the trapper.

The traces of many different struggles were to be seen between the spot where the first blood was spilt and the thicket to which it was now generally believed Asa had retreated as a place of refuge. These were interpreted into so many proofs of the weakness of the murderer, who would have sooner dispatched his victim, had not even the dying strength of the youth rendered him formidable to the infirmities of one so old. The danger of drawing some others of the hunters to the spot, by repeated firing, was deemed a sufficient reason for not again resorting to the rifle after it had performed the important duty of disabling the victim. The weapon of the dead man was not to be found, and had, doubtless, together with many other less valuable and lighter articles that he was accustomed to carry about his person, become a prize to his destroyer.

But what, in addition to the tell-tale bullet, appeared to fix the ruthless deed with peculiar certainty on the trapper was the accumulated evidence furnished by the trail; which proved, notwithstanding his deadly hurt, that the wounded man had still been able to make a long and desperate resistance to the subsequent efforts of his murderer. Ishmael seemed to press this proof with a singular mixture of sor-

row and pride; sorrow at the loss of a son whom, in their moments of amity, he highly valued; and pride at the courage and power he had manifested to his last and weakest breath.

“He died as a son of mine should die,” said the squatter, gleaning a hollow consolation from so unnatural an exultation—“a dread to his enemy to the last, and without help from the law! Come, children; we have the grave to make, and then to hunt his murderer.”

The sons of the squatter set about their melancholy office in silence and in sadness. An excavation was made in the hard earth at a great expense of toil and time, and the body was wrapped in such spare vestments as could be collected among the laborers. When these arrangements were completed, Ishmael approached the seemingly unconscious Esther, and announced his intention to inter the dead. She heard him, and quietly relinquished her grasp of the corpse, rising in silence to follow it to its narrow resting place. Here she seated herself again at the head of the grave, watching each movement of the youths with eager and jealous eyes. When a sufficiency of earth was laid upon the senseless clay of Asa to protect it from injury, Enoch and Abner entered the cavity and trod it into a solid mass by the weight of their huge frames, with an appearance of a strange, not to say savage, mixture of care and indifference. This well-known precaution was adopted to prevent the speedy exhumation of the body by some of the carnivorous beasts of the prairie, whose instinct was sure to guide them to the spot. Even the rapacious birds appeared to comprehend the nature of the ceremony, for, mysteriously apprised that the miserable victim was now about to be abandoned by the human race, they once more began to make their airy circuits above the place, screaming as if to frighten the kinsmen from their labor of caution and love.

Ishmael stood, with folded arms, steadily watching the manner in which this necessary duty was performed, and when the whole was completed he lifted his cap to his sons to thank them for their

services, with a dignity that would have become one much better nurtured. Throughout the whole of a ceremony which is ever solemn and admonitory, the squatter had maintained a grave and serious deportment. His vast features were visibly stamped with an expression of deep concern; but at no time did they falter, until he turned his back, as he believed forever, on the grave of his first-born. Nature was then stirring powerfully within him, and the muscles of his stern visage began to work perceptibly. His children fastened their eyes on his, as if to seek a direction to the strange emotions which were moving their own heavy natures, when the struggle in the bosom of the squatter suddenly ceased, and taking his wife by the arm, he raised her to her feet as if she had been an infant, saying in a voice that was perfectly steady, though a nice observer would have discovered that it was kinder than usual:

"Eester, we have now done all that man and woman can do. We raised the boy and made him such as few others were like, on the frontiers of America; and we have given him a grave. Let us go our way."

The woman turned her eyes slowly from the fresh earth, and laying her hands on the shoulders of her husband, stood, looking him anxiously in the eyes.

"Ishmael! Ishmael!" she said, "you parted from the boy in your wrath?"

"May the Lord pardon his sins as freely as I have forgiven his worst misdeeds!" calmly returned the squatter. "Woman, go you back to the rock and read your Bible; a chapter in that book always does you good. You *can* read, Eester, which is a privilege I never did enjoy."

"Yes, yes," muttered the woman, yielding to his strength and suffering herself to be led, though with strong reluctance, from the spot. "I *can* read; and how have I used the knowledge? But he, Ishmael, he has not the sin of wasted learning to answer for. We have spared him *that*, at least! whether it be in mercy or in cruelty I know not."

Her husband made no reply, but continued steadily to lead her in the direction

of their temporary abode. When they reached the summit of the swell of land, which they knew was the last spot from which the situation of the grave of Asa could be seen, they all turned, as by common concurrence, to take a farewell view of the place. The little mound itself was not visible; but it was frightfully indicated by the flock of screaming birds which hovered above. In the opposite direction a low, blue hillock, in the skirts of the horizon, pointed out the place where Esther had left the rest of her young, and served as an attraction to draw her reluctant steps from the last abode of her eldest born. Nature quickened in the bosom of the mother at the sight; and she finally yielded the rights of the dead to the more urgent claims of the living.

The foregoing occurrences had struck a spark from the stern tempers of a set of beings so singularly molded in the habits of their uncultivated lives, which served to keep alive among them the dying embers of family affection. United to their parents by ties no stronger than those which use had created, there had been great danger, as Ishmael had foreseen, that the overloaded hive would swarm, and leave him saddled with the difficulties of a young and helpless brood, unsupported by the exertions of those whom he had already brought to a state of maturity. The spirit of insubordination which emanated from the unfortunate Asa had spread among his juniors; and the squatter had been made painfully to remember the time when, in the wantonness of his youth and vigor, he had, reversing the order of the brutes, cast off his own aged and failing parents to enter into the world unshackled and free. But the danger had now abated, for a time at least; and, if his authority was not restored with all its former influence, it was admitted to exist, and to maintain its ascendancy a little longer.

It is true that his slow-minded sons, even while they submitted to the impressions of the recent event, had glimmerings of terrible distrust as to the manner in which their elder brother had met with his death. There were faint and indis-

tinct images in the minds of two or three of the oldest which portrayed the father himself as ready to imitate the example of Abraham, without the justification of the sacred authority which commanded the holy man to attempt the revolting office. But then these images were so transient, and so much obscured in intellectual mists, as to leave no very strong impressions; and the tendency of the whole transaction, as we have already said, was rather to strengthen than to weaken the authority of Ishmael.

In this disposition of mind the party continued their route toward the place whence they had that morning issued on a search which had been crowned with so melancholy a success.

The long and fruitless march which they had made under the direction of Abiram, the discovery of the body and its subsequent interment, had so far consumed the day, that, by the time their steps were retraced across the broad tract of waste which lay between the grave of Asa and the rock, the sun had fallen far below his meridian altitude. The hill had gradually risen as they approached, like some tower emerging from the bosom of the sea, and, when within a mile, the minute objects that crowned its height came dimly into view.

"It will be a sad meeting for the girls!" said Ishmael, who, from time to time, did not cease to utter something which he intended should be consolatory to the bruised spirit of his partner. "Asa was much regarded by all the young, and seldom failed to bring in from his haunts something that they loved."

"He did, he did," murmured Esther; "the boy was the pride of the family. My other children are as nothing to him!"

"Say not so, good woman," returned the father glancing his eye a little proudly at the athletic train which followed at no great distance in the rear. "Say not so, old Ester; for few fathers and mothers have greater reason to be boastful than ourselves."

"Thankful, thankful," muttered the humble woman; "ye mean thankful, Ishmael!"

"Then thankful let it be, if you like the word better, my good girl—but what has become of Nelly and the young? The child has forgotten the charge I gave her, and has not only suffered the children to sleep, but I warrant you is dreaming of the fields of Tennessee at this very moment. The mind of your niece is mainly fixed on the settlements, I reckon."

"Ay, she is not for us; I said it, and thought it, when I took her, because death had stripped her of all other friends. Death is a sad worker in the bosom of families, Ishmael! Asa had a kind feeling to the child, and they might have come one day into our places had things been so ordered."

"Nay, she is not gifted for a frontier wife, if this is the manner she is to keep house while the husband is on the hunt. Abner, let off your rifle, that they may know we ar' coming. I fear Nelly and the young ar' asleep."

The young man complied with an alacrity that manifested how gladly he would see the rounded, active figure of Ellen enlivening the ragged summit of the rock. But the report was succeeded by neither signal nor answer of any sort. For a moment the whole party stood in suspense, awaiting the result, and then a simultaneous impulse caused the whole to let off their pieces at the same instant, producing a noise which might not fail to reach the ears of all within so short a distance.

"Ah! there they come at last!" cried Abiram, who was usually among the first to seize on any circumstance which promised relief from disagreeable apprehensions.

"It is a petticoat fluttering on the line," said Esther; "I put it there myself."

"You are right; but now she comes; the jade has been taking her comfort in the tent!"

"It is not so," said Ishmael, whose usually inflexible features were beginning to manifest the uneasiness he felt. "It is the tent itself blowing about loosely in the wind. They have loosened the bottom, like silly children as they ar', and, unless care is had, the whole will come down!"

The words were scarcely uttered before a rushing blast of wind swept by the spot where they stood, raising the dust in little eddies, in its progress; and then, as if guided by a master-hand, it quitted the earth, and mounted to the precise spot on which all eyes were just then riveted. The loosened linen felt its influence and tottered; but regained its poise, and for a moment it became tranquil. The cloud of leaves next played in circling revolutions around the place and then descended with the velocity of a swooping hawk, and sailed away into the prairie in long straight lines, like a flight of swallows resting on their expanded wings. They were followed for some distance by the snow-white tent, which, however, soon fell behind the rock, leaving its highest peak as naked as when it lay in the entire solitude of the desert.

"The murderers have been here!" moaned Esther. "My babes! my babes!"

For a moment even Ishmael faltered before the weight of so unexpected a blow. But, shaking himself like an awakened lion, he sprang forward, and pushing aside the impediments of the barrier as if they had been feathers, he rushed up the ascent with an impetuosity which proved how formidable a sluggish nature may become when thoroughly aroused.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Whose party does the townsmen next admit?"

—KING JOHN.

In order to preserve an even pace between the incidents of the tale, it becomes necessary to revert to such events as occurred during the ward of Ellen Wade.

For the first few hours the cares of the honest and warm-hearted girl were confined to the simple offices of satisfying the often-repeated demands which her younger associates made on her time and patience, under the pretenses of hunger, thirst, and all the other ceaseless wants of captious and inconsiderate childhood. She had seized a moment from their importunities to steal into the tent, where she was ad-

ministering to the comforts of one far more deserving of her tenderness, when an outcry among the children recalled her to the duties she had momentarily forgotten.

"See, Nelly, see!" exclaimed half a dozen eager voices; "yonder ar' men; and Phoebe says that they ar' Sioux Indians!"

Ellen turned her eyes in the direction in which so many arms were already extended, and to her consternation beheld several men advancing manifestly and swiftly in a straight line toward the rock. She counted four, but was unable to make out anything concerning their characters, except that they were not any of those who of right were entitled to admission into the fortress. It was a fearful moment for Ellen. Looking around at the juvenile and frightened flock that pressed upon the skirts of her garments, she endeavored to recall to her confused faculties some one of the many tales of female heroism with which the history of the Western frontier abounded. In one a stockade had been successfully defended by a single man, supported by three or four women, for days against the assault of a hundred enemies. In another, the women alone had been able to protect the children and the less valuable effects of their absent husbands; and a third was not wanting in which a solitary female had destroyed her sleeping captors and given liberty not only to herself, but to a brood of helpless young. This was the case most nearly assimilated to the situation in which Ellen now found herself; and, with flushing cheeks and kindling eyes, the girl began to consider and to prepare her slender means of defense.

She posted the larger girls at the levers that were to cast the rocks on the assailants; the smaller were to be used more for show than any positive service they could perform; while, like any other leader, she reserved her own person as a superintendent and encourager of the whole. When these dispositions were made she endeavored to await the issue with an air of composure that she intended should inspire her assistants with the confidence necessary to insure success.

Although Ellen was vastly their superior in that spirit which emanates from moral qualities, she was by no means the equal of the two eldest daughters of Esther in the important military property of insensibility to danger. Reared in the hardihood of a migrating life on the skirts of society, where they had become familiarized to the sights and dangers of the wilderness, these girls promised fairly to become, at some future day, no less distinguished than their mother for daring, and for that singular mixture of good and evil which, in a wide sphere of action, would probably have enabled the wife of a squatter to enroll her name among the remarkable females of her time. Esther had already, on one occasion, made good the log tenement of Ishmael against an inroad of savages; and, on another she had been left for dead by her enemies, after a defense that, with a more civilized foe, would have entitled her to the honors of a liberal capitulation. These facts, and sundry others of a similar nature, had often been recapitulated with suitable exultation in the presence of her daughters, and the bosoms of the young amazons were now strangely fluctuating between natural terror and the ambitious wish to do something that might render them worthy of being the children of such a mother. It appeared that the opportunity for distinction of this wild character was no longer to be denied them.

The party of strangers was already within a hundred rods of the rock. Either consulting their usual wary method of advancing, or admonished by the threatening attitude of two figures, who had thrust forth the barrels of as many old muskets from behind the stone intrenchment, the new-comers halted, under favor of an inequality in the ground, where a growth of grass thicker than common offered the advantage of concealment. From this spot they reconnoitered the fortress for several anxious and, to Ellen, interminable minutes. Then one advanced singly, and apparently more in the character of a herald than of an assailant.

"Phoebe, *do you fire*," and "No, Hetty, *you*," were beginning to be heard between

the half-frightened and yet eager daughters of the squatter, when Ellen probably saved the advancing stranger from some imminent alarm, if from no greater danger, by exclaiming—

"Lay down the muskets; it is Dr. Battius!"

Her subordinates so far complied as to withdraw their hands from the locks, though the threatening barrels still maintained the portentous levels. The naturalist, who had advanced with sufficient deliberation to note the smallest hostile demonstration of the garrison, now raised a white handkerchief on the end of his fusee, and came within speaking distance of the fortress. Then, assuming what he intended should be an imposing and dignified semblance of authority, he blustered forth, in a voice that might have been heard at a much greater distance—

"What ho! I summon ye all, in the name of the Confederacy of the United Sovereign States of North America, to submit yourselves to the laws."

"Doctor or no doctor, he is an enemy, Nellie. Hear him! hear him! He talks of the law."

"Stop! stay till I hear his answer!" said the nearly breathless Ellen, pushing aside the dangerous weapons, which were again pointed in the direction of the shrinking person of the herald.

"I admonish and forewarn ye all," continued the startled doctor, "that I am a peaceful citizen of the before-named Confederacy, or, to speak with greater accuracy, Union, a supporter of the social compact, and a lover of good order and amity;" then, perceiving that the danger was at least temporarily removed, he once more raised his voice to the hostile pitch: "I charge ye all, therefore, to submit to the laws."

"I thought you were a friend," Ellen replied, "and that you traveled with my uncle, in virtue of an agreement——"

"It is void. I have been deceived in the very premises, and I hereby pronounce a certain compactum, entered into and concluded between Ishmael Bush, squatter, and Obed Battius, M.D., to be incontinently null and of non effect. Nay,

children, to be null is merely a negative property, and is fraught with no evil to your worthy parent; so lay aside the fire-arms and listen to the admonitions of reason. I declare it vicious—null—abrogated. As for thee, Nelly, my feelings toward thee are not at all given to hostility; therefore listen to that which I have to utter, nor turn away thine ears in the wantonness of security. Thou knowest the character of the man with whom thou dwellest, young woman, and thou also knowest the danger of being found in evil company. Abandon, then, the trifling advantages of thy situation, and yield the rock peaceably to the will of those who accompany me—a legion, young woman—I do assure you, an invincible and powerful legion. Render, therefore, the effects of this lawless and wicked squatter—nay, children, such disregard of human life is frightful in those who have so recently received the gift, in their own persons! Point those dangerous weapons aside, I entreat of you; more for your own sakes than for mine. Hetty, hast thou forgotten who appeased thine anguish when thy auricular nerves were tortured by the colds and damps of the naked earth? And thou, Phœbe, ungrateful and forgetful Phœbe! but for this very arm, which you would prostrate with an endless paralysis, thy incisors would still be giving thee pain and sorrow. Lay, then, aside thy weapons and hearken to the advice of one who has always been thy friend. And now, young woman," still keeping a jealous eye on the muskets, which the girl had suffered to be diverted a little from their aim, "and now, young woman, for the last and therefore the most solemn asking: I demand of thee the surrender of this rock, without delay or resistance, in the joint names of power, of justice, and of the ——" law, he would have added; but recollecting that this ominous word would again provoke the hostility of the squatter's children, he succeeded in swallowing it in good season, and concluded with the less dangerous and more convertible term of "reason."

This extraordinary summons failed, however, of producing the desired effect.

It proved utterly unintelligible to his younger listeners, with the exception of the few offensive terms, already sufficiently distinguished; and though Ellen better comprehended the meaning of the herald, she appeared as little moved by his rhetoric as her companions. At those passages which he intended should be tender and affecting, the intelligent girl, though tortured by painful feelings, had even manifested a disposition to laugh, while to the threats she turned an utterly insensible ear.

"I know not the meaning of all you wish to say, Dr. Battius," she quietly replied, when he had ended; "but I am sure, if it would teach me to betray my trust, it is what I ought not to hear. I caution you to attempt no violence, for, let my wishes be what they may, you see I am surrounded by a force that can easily put me down, and you know, or ought to know, too well the temper of this family, to trifle in such a matter with any of its members, let them be of what sex or age they may."

"I am not entirely ignorant of human character," returned the naturalist, prudently receding a little from the position which he had until now stoutly maintained at the very base of the hill. "But here comes one who may know its secret windings still better than I."

"Ellen! Ellen Wade!" cried Paul Hover, who had advanced to his elbow, without betraying any of that sensitiveness which had so manifestly discomposed the doctor; "I didn't expect to find an enemy in you!"

"Nor shall you, when you ask that which I can grant without treachery. You know that my uncle has trusted his family to my care, and shall I so far betray the trust as to let in his bitterest enemies to murder his children, perhaps, and to rob him of the little which the Indians have left?"

"Am I a murderer—is this old man—this officer of the States," pointing to the trapper and his newly-discovered friend, both of whom by this time stood at his side; "is either of these likely to do the things you name?"

"What is it then you ask of me?" said Ellen, wringing her hands, in excessive doubt.

"The beast! nothing more nor less than the squatter's hidden, ravenous, dangerous beast!"

"Excellent young woman," commenced the young stranger, who had so lately joined himself to the party on the prairie—but his mouth was immediately stopped by a significant sign from the trapper who whispered in his ear:

"Let the lad be our spokesman. Natur' will work in the bosom of the child, and we shall gain our object in good time."

"The whole truth is out, Ellen," Paul continued, "and we have lined the squatter into his most secret misdoings. We have come to right the wronged and to free the imprisoned. Now, if you are the girl of a true heart, as I have always believed, so far from throwing straws in our way, you will join in the general swarming, and leave old Ishmael and his hive to the bees of his own breed."

"I have sworn a solemn oath——"

"A compactum which is entered into through ignorance or in duress is null in the sight of all good moralists," cried the doctor.

"Hush, hush!" again the trapper whispered; "leave it all to Natur' and the lad."

"I have sworn in the sight and by the name of him who is the founder and ruler of all that is good, whether it be in morals or in religion," Ellen continued, "neither to reveal the contents of that tent nor to help its prisoner to escape. We are both solemnly, terribly sworn; our lives perhaps have been the gift we received for the promises. It is true you are masters of the secret, but not through any means of ours, nor do I know that I can justify myself for even being neutral, while you attempt to invade the dwelling of my uncle in this hostile manner."

"I can prove beyond the power of refutation," the naturalist eagerly exclaimed, "by Paley, Berkeley, aye, even by the immortal Binkershoeck, that a compactum, concluded while one of the parties, be

it a state or be it an individual, is in durance——"

"You will ruffle the temper of the child with your abusive language," said the cautious trapper, "while the lad, if left to human feelings, will bring her down to the meekness of a fawn. Ah! you are like myself, little knowing in the natur' of hidden kindnesses!"

"Is this the only vow you have taken, Ellen?" Paul continued, in a tone which, for the gay, light-hearted bee-hunter, sounded dolorous and reproachful. "Have you sworn only to this? Are the words which the squatter says to be as honey in your mouth and all other promises like so much useless comb?"

The paleness which had taken possession of the usually cheerful countenance of Ellen was hid in a bright glow that was plainly visible even at the distance at which she stood. She hesitated a moment, as if struggling to repress something very like resentment, before she answered with all her native spirit—

"I know not what right any one has to question me about oaths and promises, which can only concern her who has made them, if, indeed, any of the sort you mention have ever been made at all. I shall hold no further discourse with one who thinks so much of himself, and takes advice merely of his own feelings."

"Now, old trapper, do you hear that?" said the unsophisticated bee-hunter, turning abruptly to his aged friend. "The meanest insect that skims the heavens, when it has got its load, flies straight and honestly to its nest or hive, according to its kind; but the ways of a woman's mind are as knotty as a gnarled oak, and more crooked than the windings of the Mississippi!"

"Nay, nay, child," said the trapper, good-naturedly interfering in behalf of the offending Paul; "you are to consider that youth is hasty and not overgiven to thought. But then a promise is a promise, and not to be thrown aside and forgotten, like the hoofs and horns of a buffalo."

"I thank you for reminding me of my oath," said the still resentful Ellen, biting

her pretty nether lip with vexation; "I might else have proved forgetful!"

"Ah! female natur' is awakened in her," said the old man, shaking his head in a manner to show how much he was disappointed in the result; "but it manifests itself against the true spirit."

"Ellen!" cried the young stranger, who until now had been an attentive listener to the parley, "since Ellen is the name by which you are known——"

"They often add it to another. I am sometimes called by the name of my father."

"Call her Nelly Wade at once," muttered Paul; "it is her rightful name, and I care not if she keeps it forever!"

"Wade, I should have added," continued the youth. "You will acknowledge that, though bound by no oath myself, I at least have known how to respect those of others. You are a witness yourself that I have forborne to utter a single call, while I am certain it could reach those ears it would gladden so much. Permit me, then, to ascend the rock singly; I promise a perfect indemnity to your kinsman against any injury his effects may sustain."

Ellen seemed to hesitate, but catching a glimpse of Paul, who stood leaning proudly on his rifle, whistling, with an appearance of the utmost indifference, the air of a boating-song, she recovered her recollection in time to answer—

"I have been left the captain of the rock while my uncle and his sons hunt, and captain will I remain till he returns to receive back the charge."

"This is wasting moments that will not soon return, and neglecting an opportunity that may never occur again," the young soldier gravely remarked. "The sun is beginning to fall already, and many minutes cannot elapse before the squatter and his savage brood will be returning to their huts."

Dr. Battius cast a glance behind him, and took up the discourse by saying—

"Perfection is always found in maturity, whether it be in the animal or in the intellectual world. Reflection is the mother of wisdom, and wisdom the parent of success.

I propose that we retire to a discreet distance from this impregnable position, and there hold a convocation, or council, to deliberate on what manner we may sit down regularly before the place; or, perhaps, by postponing the siege to another season, gain the aid of auxiliaries from the inhabited countries, and thus secure the dignity of the laws from any danger of a repulse."

"A storm would be better," the soldier smilingly answered, measuring the height and scanning all its difficulties with a deliberate eye; "'twould be but a broken arm or a bruised head at the worst."

"Then have at it!" shouted the impetuous bee-hunter, making a spring that at once put him out of danger from shot, by carrying him beneath the projecting ledge on which the garrison was posted. "Now do your worst, young devils of a wicked breed; you have but a moment to work your mischief!"

"Paul! rash Paul!" shrieked Ellen; "another step and the rocks will crush you! they hang but by a thread, and these girls are ready and willing to let them fall!"

"Then drive the accursed swarm from the hive; for scale the rock I will, though I find it covered with hornets."

"Let her if she dare!" tauntingly cried the eldest of the girls, brandishing a musket with a mien and resolution that would have done credit to her Amazonian dam. "I know you, Nelly Wade; you are with the lawyers in your heart, and if you come a foot nigher you shall have frontier punishment. Put in another pry, girls; in with it! I should like to see the man of them that dare come up into the camp of Ishmael Bush without asking leave of his children!"

"Stir not, Paul; for your life keep beneath the rock!"

Ellen was interrupted by the same bright vision which on the preceding day had stayed another scarcely less portentous tumult by exhibiting itself on the same giddy height where it was now seen.

"In the name of him who commandeth all, I implore you to pause—both you, who so madly incur the risk, and you, who so

rashly offer to take that which you never can return!" said a voice, in a slightly foreign accent, that instantly drew all eyes upward.

"Inez!" cried the officer, "do I again see you? Mine shall you now be, though a million devils were posted on this rock. Push up, brave woodsman, and give room for another."

The sudden appearance of the figure from the tent had created a momentary stupor among the defenders of the rock, which might, with suitable forbearance, have been happily improved; but startled by the voice of Middleton, the surprised Phœbe discharged her musket at the female, scarcely knowing whether she aimed at the life of a mortal or at some being which belonged to another world. Ellen uttered a cry of horror, and then sprang after her alarmed or wounded friend, she knew not which, into the tent.

During this moment of dangerous by-play, the sounds of a serious attack were very distinctly audible beneath. Paul had profited by the commotion over his head to change his place so far as to make room for Middleton. The latter was followed by the naturalist, who, in a state of mental aberration, produced by the report of the musket, had instinctively rushed toward the rocks for cover. The trapper remained where he was last seen, an unmoved but close observer of the several proceedings. Though averse to enter into actual hostilities, the old man was, however, far from being useless. Favored by his position, he was enabled to apprise his friends of the movements of those who plotted their destruction above, and to advise and control their advance accordingly.

In the meantime, the children of Esther were true to the spirit they had inherited from their redoubtable mother. The instant they found themselves delivered from the presence of Ellen and her unknown companion, they bestowed an undivided attention on their more masculine and certainly more dangerous assailants, who by this time had made a complete lodgment among the crags of the citadel. The repeated summons to surrender, which Paul uttered in a voice that

he intended should strike terror into their young bosoms, were as little heeded as were the calls of the trapper to abandon a resistance which might prove fatal to some among them, without offering the smallest probability of eventual success. Encouraging each other to persevere, they poised the fragments of rocks, prepared the lighter missiles for immediate service, and thrust forward the barrels of the muskets with a business-like air and a coolness that would have done credit to men practiced in warfare.

"Keep under the ledge," said the trapper, pointing out to Paul the manner in which he should proceed; "keep in your foot more, lad—ah! you see the warning was not amiss! had the stone struck it the bees would have had the prairies to themselves. Now, namesake of my friend—Uncas in name and spirit! now, if you have the activity of *Le Cerf Agile*, you may make a fair leap to the right and gain twenty feet without danger. Beware the bush—beware the bush! 'twill prove a treacherous hold! Ah! he has done it; safely and bravely has he done it!—Your turn comes next, friend, that follows the fruits of *Natur*'. Push you to the left, and divide the attention of the children.—Nay, girls, fire—my old ears are used to the whistling of lead; and little reason have I to prove a doe-heart, with fourscore years on my back." He shook his head with a melancholy smile, but without flinching in a muscle, as the bullet which the exasperated Hetty fired passed innocently at no great distance from the spot where he stood. "It is safer keeping in your track than dodging when a weak finger pulls the trigger," he continued; "but it is a solemn sight to witness how much human nature is inclined to evil in one so young!—Well done, my man of beasts and plants! Another such leap, and you may laugh at all the squatter's bars and walls. The doctor has got his temper up! I see it in his eyes, and something good will come of him!—Keep closer, man—keep closer."

The trapper, though he was not deceived as to the state of Dr. Battius's mind, was, however, greatly in error as to the excit-

ing cause. While imitating the movements of his companions, and toiling his way upward with the utmost caution, and not without great inward tribulation, the eye of the naturalist had caught a glimpse of an unknown plant a few yards above his head, and in a situation more than commonly exposed to the missiles which the girls were unceasingly hurling in the direction of the assailants. Forgetting in an instant everything but the glory of being the first to give this jewel to the catalogues of science, he sprang upward at the prize with the avidity with which the sparrow darts upon the butterfly. The rocks which instantly came thundering down announced that he was seen; and for a moment, while his form was concealed in the cloud of dust and fragments which followed the furious descent, the trapper gave him up for lost; but the next instant he was seen safely seated in a cavity, formed by some of the projecting stones which had yielded to the shock, holding triumphantly in his hand the captured stem, which he was already devouring with delighted and certainly not unskillful eyes. Paul profited by the opportunity. Turning his course, with the quickness of thought he sprang to the post which Obed thus securely occupied, and unceremoniously making a footstool of his shoulder as the latter stooped over his treasure, he bounded through the breach left by the fallen rock and gained the level. He was followed by Middleton, who joined him in seizing and disarming the girls. In this manner a bloodless and complete victory was obtained over that citadel which Ishmael had vainly flattered himself might prove impregnable.

CHAPTER XV.

"So smile the heavens upon this holy act,
That after hours of sorrow chide us not!"
—SHAKESPEARE.

It is proper that the course of the narrative should be stayed while we revert to those causes which have brought in their train of consequences the singular contest

just related. The interruption must necessarily be as brief as we hope it may prove satisfactory to that class of readers who require that no gap should be left, by those who assume the office of historians, for their own fertile imaginations to fill.

Among the troops sent by the Government of the United States to take possession of its newly acquired territory in the West, was a detachment led by the young soldier who has become so busy an actor in the scenes of our legend. The mild and indolent descendants of the ancient colonists received their new compatriots without distrust, well knowing that the transfer raised them from the condition of subjects to the more enviable distinction of citizens in a government of laws. The new rulers exercised their functions with discretion, and wielded their delegated authority without offense. In such a novel intermixture, however, of men born and nurtured in freedom, and the compliant minions of absolute power, the Catholic and the Protestant, the active and the indolent, some little time was necessary to blend the discrepant elements of society. In attaining so desirable an end, woman was made to perform her accustomed and grateful office. The barriers of prejudice and religion were broken through by the irresistible power of the master-passion; and family unions, ere long, began to cement the political tie which had made a forced conjunction between people so opposite in their habits, their educations, and their opinions.

Middleton was among the first of the new possessors of the soil who became captive to the charms of a Louisianian lady. In the immediate vicinity of the post he had been directed to occupy dwelt the chief of one of those ancient colonial families which had been content to slumber for ages amid the ease, indolence and wealth of the Spanish provinces. He was an officer of the crown, and had been induced to remove from the Floridas among the French of an adjoining province by a rich succession of which he had become the inheritor. The name of Don Augustin de Certavollos was scarcely known beyond the limits of the little

town in which he resided, though he found a secret pleasure himself in pointing it out, in large scrolls of musty documents, to an only child, as enrolled among the former heroes and grandees of Old and New Spain. This fact, so important to himself and of so little moment to anybody else, was the principal reason that, while his more vivacious Gallic neighbors were not slow to open a frank communion with their visitors, he chose to keep aloof, seemingly content with the society of his daughter, who was a girl just emerging from the condition of childhood into that of a woman.

The curiosity of the youthful Inez, however, was not so inactive. She had not heard the martial music of the garrison melting on the evening air, nor seen the strange banner which fluttered over the heights that rose at no great distance from her father's extensive grounds, without experiencing some of those secret impulses which are thought to distinguish the sex. Natural timidity, and that retiring and perhaps peculiar lassitude which forms the very groundwork of female fascination in the tropical provinces of Spain, held her in their seemingly indissoluble bonds; and it is more than probable that, had not an accident occurred in which Middleton was of some personal service to her father, so long a time would have elapsed before they met, that another direction might have been given to the wishes of one who was just of an age to be alive to all the power of youth and beauty.

Providence—or, if that imposing word is too just to be classical, fate—had otherwise decreed. The haughty and reserved Don Augustin was by far too observant of the forms of that station on which he so much valued himself to forget the duties of a gentleman. Gratitude for the kindness of Middleton induced him, to open his doors to the officers of the garrison, and to admit of a guarded but polite intercourse. Reserve gradually gave way before the propriety and candor of their spirited young leader, and it was not long ere the affluent planter rejoiced as much as his daughter whenever the well-known signal at the gate announced one of these

agreeable visits from the commander of the post.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the impression which the charms of Inez produced on the soldier, to delay the tale in order to write a wire-drawn account of the progressive influence that elegance of deportment, manly beauty, and undivided assiduity and intelligence were likely to produce on the sensitive mind of a romantic, warm-hearted, and secluded girl of sixteen. It is sufficient for our purpose to say that they loved, that the youth was not backward to declare his feelings, that he prevailed with some facility over the scruples of the maiden, and with no little difficulty over the objections of her father, and that, before the province of Louisiana had been six months in the possession of the States, the officer of the latter was the affianced husband of the richest heiress on the banks of the Mississippi.

Although we have presumed the reader to be acquainted with the manner in which such results are commonly attained, it is not to be supposed that the triumph of Middleton, either over the prejudices of the father or over those of the daughter, was achieved without difficulty. Religion formed a stubborn and nearly irremovable obstacle with both. The devoted young man patiently submitted to a formidable essay which Father Ignatius was deputed to make in order to convert him to the true faith. The effort on the part of the worthy priest was systematic, vigorous, and long sustained.

A dozen times (it was at those moments when glimpses of the light, sylph-like form of Inez flitted like some fairy being past the scene of their conferences) the good father fancied he was on the eve of a glorious triumph over infidelity; but all his hopes were frustrated by some unlooked-for opposition on the part of the subject of his pious labors. So long as the assault on his faith was distant and feeble, Middleton, who was no great proficient in polemics, submitted to its effects with the patience and humility of a martyr; but the moment the good father, who felt such concern in his future happi-

ness, was tempted to improve his vantage-ground by calling in the aid of some of the peculiar subtleties of his own creed, the young man was too good a soldier not to make head against the hot attack. He came to the contest, it is true, with no weapons more formidable than common sense and some little knowledge of the habits of his country as contrasted with that of his adversary; but with these home-bred implements he never failed to repulse the father with something of the power with which a nervous cudgel-player would deal with a skillful master of the rapier, setting at naught his passados by the direct and unanswerable arguments of a broken head and a shivered weapon.

Before the controversy was terminated, an inroad of Protestants had come to aid the soldier. The reckless freedom of such among them as thought only of this life, and the consistent and tempered piety of others, caused the honest priest to look about him in concern. The influence of example on the one hand, and the contamination of too free an intercourse on the other, began to manifest themselves even in that portion of his own flock which he had supposed to be too thoroughly folded in spiritual government ever to stray. It was time to turn his thoughts from the offensive, and to prepare his followers to resist the lawless deluge of opinion which threatened to break down the barriers of their faith. Like a wise commander who finds he has occupied too much ground for the amount of his force, he began to curtail his outworks. The relics were concealed from profane eyes; his people were admonished not to speak of miracles before a race that not only denied their existence, but who had even the desperate hardihood to challenge their proofs; and even the Bible itself was prohibited with terrible denunciations, for the triumphant reason that it was liable to be misinterpreted.

In the meantime it became necessary to report to Don Augustin the effects his arguments and prayers had produced on the heretical disposition of the young soldier. No man is prone to confess his weakness at the very moment when circumstances demand the utmost efforts of his strength.

By a species of pious fraud, for which no doubt the worthy priest found his absolution in the purity of his motives, he declared that, while no positive change was actually wrought in the mind of Middleton, there was every reason to hope the entering wedge of argument had been driven to its head, and that in consequence an opening was left through which it might rationally be hoped the blessed seeds of a religious fructification would find their way, especially if the subject was left uninterrupted to enjoy the advantage of Catholic communion.

Don Augustin himself was now seized with the desire of proselyting. Even the soft and amiable Inez thought it would be a glorious consummation of her wishes to be a humble instrument of bringing her lover into the bosom of the true church. The offers of Middleton were promptly accepted; and, while the father looked forward impatiently to the day assigned for the nuptials as to the pledge of his own success, the daughter thought of it with feelings in which the holy emotions of her faith were blended with the softer sensations of her years and situation.

The sun rose, the morning of her nuptials, on a day so bright and cloudless that Inez hailed it as a harbinger of future happiness. Father Ignatius performed the office of the Church in a little chapel attached to the estate of Don Augustin; and, long ere the sun had begun to fall, Middleton pressed the blushing and timid young creole to his bosom, his acknowledged and unalienable wife. It had pleased the parties to pass the day of the wedding in retirement, dedicating it solely to the best and purest affections, aloof from the noisy and heartless rejoicings of a compelled festivity.

Middleton was returning through the grounds of Don Augustin, from a visit of duty to his encampment, at that hour in which the light of the sun begins to melt into the shadows of evening, when a glimpse of a robe similar to that in which Inez had accompanied him to the altar caught his eye through the foliage of a retired arbor. He approached the spot with a delicacy that was rather increased

than diminished by the claim she had perhaps given him to intrude on her private moments; but the sounds of her soft voice, which was offering up prayers in which he heard himself named by the dearest of all appellations, overcame his scruples, and induced him to take a position where he might listen without fear of detection. It was certainly grateful to the feelings of a husband to be able in this manner to lay bare the spotless soul of his wife, and to find that his own image lay enshrined amid its purest and holiest aspirations. His self-esteem was too much flattered not to induce him to overlook the immediate object of the petitioner. While she prayed that she might become the humble instrument of bringing him into the flock of the faithful, she petitioned for forgiveness on her own behalf, if presumption or indifference to the counsel of the Church had caused her to set too high a value on her influence, and led her into the dangerous error of hazarding her own soul by espousing a heretic. There was so much of fervent piety mingled with so strong a burst of natural feeling, so much of the woman blended with the angel in her prayers, that Middleton could have forgiven her had she termed him a pagan, for the sweetness and interest with which she petitioned in his favor.

The young man waited until his bride arose from her knees, and then he joined her, as if entirely ignorant of what had occurred.

"It is getting late, my Inez," he said, "and Don Augustin would be apt to reproach you with inattention to your health, in being abroad at such an hour. What, then, am I to do, who am charged with all his authority and twice his love?"

"Be like him in *every* thing," she answered, looking up in his face, with tears in her eyes, and speaking with emphasis; "in *every* thing. Imitate my father, Middleton, and I can ask no more of you."

"Nor for me, Inez? I doubt not that I should be all you can wish, were I to become as good as the worthy and respectable Don Augustin. But you are to make

some allowances for the infirmities and habits of a soldier. Now let us go and join this excellent father."

"Not yet," said his bride, gently extricating herself from the arm that he had thrown around her slight form, while he urged her from the place. "I have still another duty to perform, before I can submit so implicitly to your orders, soldier though you are. I promised the worthy Inesella, my faithful nurse, she who, as you heard, has so long been a mother to me, Middleton. I promised her a visit at this hour. It is the last, as she thinks, that she can receive from her own child, and I cannot disappoint her. Go you, then, to Don Augustin; in one short hour I will rejoin you."

"Remember, it is but an hour."

"One hour," repeated Inez, and she kissed her hand to him; and then blushing, ashamed at her own boldness, she darted from the arbor, and was seen for an instant gliding toward the cottage of her nurse, in which at the next moment she disappeared.

Middleton returned slowly and thoughtfully to the house, often bending his eyes in the direction in which he had last seen his wife, as if he would fain trace her lovely form, in the gloom of the evening, still floating through the vacant space. Don Augustin received him with warmth, and for many minutes his mind was amused by relating to his new kinsman plans for the future. The exclusive old Spaniard listened to his glowing but true account of the prosperity and happiness of those States of which he had been an ignorant neighbor half his life, partly in wonder and partly with that sort of incredulity with which one attends to what he fancies are the exaggerated descriptions of a too partial friendship.

In this manner the hour for which Inez had conditioned passed away much sooner than her husband could have thought possible, in her absence. At length his looks began to wander to the clock, and then the minutes were counted, as one rolled by after another, and Inez did not appear. The hand had already made half of another circuit around the face of the dial,

when Middleton arose and announced his determination to go and offer himself as an escort to the absentee. He found the night dark and the heavens charged with threatening vapor, which in that climate was the infallible forerunner of a gust. Stimulated no less by the unpropitious aspect of the skies than by his secret uneasiness, he quickened his pace, making long and rapid strides in the direction of the cottage of Inesella. Twenty times he stopped, fancying that he caught glimpses of the fairy form of Inez, tripping across the grounds on her return to the mansion-house, and as often he was obliged to resume his course in disappointment. He reached the gate of the cottage, knocked, opened the door, entered, and even stood in the presence of the aged nurse without meeting the person of her he sought. She had already left the place on her return to her father's house. Believing that he must have passed her in the darkness, Middleton retraced his steps to meet with another disappointment. Inez had not been seen.

Without communicating his intention to any one, the bridegroom proceeded with a palpitating heart to the little sequestered arbor, where he had overheard his bride offering up those petitions for his happiness and conversion. Here, too, he was disappointed; and then all was afloat in the painful incertitude of doubt and conjecture.

For many hours a secret distrust of the motives of his wife caused Middleton to proceed in the search with delicacy and caution. But as day dawned, without restoring her to the arms of her father or her husband, reserve was thrown aside, and her unaccountable absence was loudly proclaimed. The inquiries after the lost Inez were now direct and open; but they proved equally fruitless. No one had seen her or heard of her, from the moment that she left the cottage of her nurse.

Day succeeded day, and still no tidings rewarded the search that was immediately instituted, until she was finally given over by most of her relations and friends as irretrievably lost.

An event of so extraordinary a charac-

ter was not likely to be soon forgotten. It excited speculation, gave rise to an infinity of rumors, and not a few inventions. The prevalent opinion among such of those immigrants who were overrunning the country, as had time in the multitude of their employments to think of any foreign concerns, was the simple and direct conclusion that the absent bride was no more nor less than a *felo de se*. Father Ignatius had many doubts and much secret compunction of conscience; but, like a wise chief, he endeavored to turn the sad event to some account in the impending warfare of faith. Changing his battery, he whispered in the ears of a few of his oldest parishioners that he had been deceived in the state of Middleton's mind, which he was now compelled to believe was completely stranded on the quicksands of heresy. He began to show his relics again, and was even heard to allude once more to the delicate and nearly forgotten subject of modern miracles. In consequence of these demonstrations on the part of the venerable priest, it came to be whispered among the faithful, and finally it was adopted as part of the parish creed, that Inez had been translated to heaven.

Don Augustin had all the feelings of a father, but they were smothered in the lassitude of a creole. Like his spiritual governor, he began to think that they had been wrong in consigning one so pure, so young, so lovely, and above all so pious, to the arms of a heretic; and he was fain to believe that the calamity which had befallen his age was a judgment on his presumption and want of adherence to established forms. It is true that, as the whispers of the congregation came to his ears, he found present consolation in their belief; but then Nature was too powerful, and had too strong a hold of the old man's heart, not to give rise to the rebellious thought that the succession of his daughter to the heavenly inheritance was a little premature.

But Middleton, the lover, the husband, the bridegroom—Middleton was nearly crushed by the weight of the unexpected and terrible blow. Educated himself

under the dominion of a simple and rational faith, in which nothing is attempted to be concealed from the believers, he could have no other apprehensions for the fate of Inez than such as grew out of his knowledge of the superstitious opinions she entertained of his own church. It is needless to dwell on the mental tortures that he endured, or all the various surmises, hopes, and disappointments that he was fated to experience in the first few weeks of his misery. A jealous distrust of the motives of Inez, and a secret, lingering hope that he should yet find her, had tempered his inquiries, without, however, causing him to abandon them entirely. But time was beginning to deprive him even of the mortifying reflection that he was intentionally though perhaps temporarily deserted, and he was gradually yielding to the more painful conviction that she was dead, when his hopes were suddenly revived in a new and singular manner.

The young commander was slowly and sorrowfully returning from an evening parade of his troops to his own quarters, which stood at some little distance from the place of the encampment, and on the same high bluff of land, when his vacant eyes fell on the figure of a man, who by the regulations of the place was not entitled to be there at that forbidden hour. The stranger was meanly dressed, with every appearance about his person and countenance of squalid poverty and of the most dissolute habits. Sorrow had softened the military pride of Middleton, and, as he passed the crouching form of the intruder, he said, in tones of great mildness, or rather of kindness:

"You will be given a night in the guard-house, friend, should the patrol find you here; there is a dollar—go and get a better place to sleep in and something to eat."

"I swallow all my food, captain, without chewing," returned the vagabond, with the low exultation of an accomplished villain, as he eagerly seized the silver. "Make this Mexican twenty, and I will sell you a secret."

"Go, go," said the other, with a little

of a soldier's severity returning to his manner. "Go, before I order the guard to seize you."

"Well, go I will; but if I do go, captain, I shall take my knowledge with me; and then you may live a widower bewitched till the tattoo of life is beat off."

"What mean you, fellow?" exclaimed Middleton, turning quickly toward the wretch, who was already dragging his diseased limbs from the place.

"I mean to have the value of this dollar in Spanish brandy, and then come back and sell you my secret for enough to buy a barrel."

"If you have anything to say, speak now," continued Middleton, restraining with difficulty the impatience that urged him to betray his feelings.

"I am a-dry, and I can never talk with elegance when my throat is husky, captain. How much will you give to know what I can tell you? Let it be something handsome—such as one gentleman can offer to another."

"I believe it would be better justice to order the drummer to pay you a visit, fellow. To what does your boasted secret relate?"

"Matrimony—a wife and no wife; a pretty face and a rich bride. Do I speak plain now, captain?"

"If you know anything relating to my wife, say it at once; you need not fear for your reward."

"Ay, captain, I have drove many a bargain in my time, and sometimes I have been paid in money, and sometimes I have been paid in promises; now the last are what I call pinching food."

"Name your price."

"Twenty—no, damn it, it's worth thirty dollars if it's worth a cent."

"Here, then, is your money; but remember, if you tell me nothing worth knowing, I have a force that can easily deprive you of it again, and punish your insolence into the bargain."

The fellow examined the bank bills he received with a jealous eye, and then pocketed them, apparently well satisfied of their being genuine.

"I like a Northern note," he said, very

coolly; "they have a character to lose like myself. No fear of me, captain; I am a man of honor, and I shall not tell you a word more nor a word less than I know of my own knowledge to be true."

"Proceed then without further delay, or I may repent and order you to be deprived of all your gains; the silver as well as the notes."

"Honor, if you die for it!" returned the miscreant, holding up his hand in affected horror at so treacherous a threat.

"Well, captain, you must know that gentlemen don't all live by the same calling; some keep what they've got, and some get what they can."

"You have been a thief."

"I scorn the word. I have been a humanity-hunter. Do you know what that means? Ay, it has many interpretations. Some people think the woolly-heads are miserable, working on hot plantations under a broiling sun—and all such sorts of inconveniences. Well, captain, I have been, in my time, a man who has been willing to give them the pleasure of variety, at least, by changing the scene for them. You understand me?"

"You are, in plain language, a kidnapper."

"Have been, my worthy captain—have been; but just now a little reduced, like a merchant who leaves off selling tobacco by the hogshead to deal in it by the yard. I have been a soldier, too, in my day. What is said to be the great secret of our trade, can you tell me that?"

"I know not," said Middleton, beginning to tire of the fellow's trifling—"courage?"

"No, legs—legs to fight with and legs to run away with; and therein you see my two callings agreed. My legs are none of the best just now, and without legs a kidnapper would carry on a losing trade; but then there are men enough left better provided than I am."

"Stolen!" groaned the horror-struck husband.

"On her travels, as sure as you are standing still!"

"Villain, what reason have you for believing a thing so shocking?"

"Hands off—hands off—do you think my tongue can do its work the better for a little squeezing of the throat? Have patience, and you shall know it all; but if you treat me so ungenteelly again, I shall be obliged to call in the assistance of the lawyers."

"Say on, but if you utter a single word more or less than the truth, expect instant vengeance."

"Are you fool enough to believe what such a scoundrel as I am tells you, captain, unless it has probability to back it? I know you are not; therefore I will give my facts and my opinions, and then leave you to chew on them, while I go and drink of your generosity. I know a man who is called Abiram White—I believe the knave took the name to show his enmity to the race of blacks! But this gentleman is now, and has been for years, to my certain knowledge, a regular translator of the human body from one State to another. I have dealt with him in my time, and a cheating dog he is! No more honor in him than meat in my stomach. I saw him here in this very town, the day of your wedding. He was in company with his wife's brother, and pretended to be a settler on the hunt for new land. A noble set they were, to carry on business—seven sons, each of them as tall as your sergeant with his cap on. Well, the moment I heard that your wife was lost, I saw at once that Abiram had laid his hands on her."

"Do you know this—can this be true? What reason have you to fancy a thing so wild?"

"Reason enough; I know Abiram White. Now will you add a trifle just to keep my throat from parching?"

"Go, go; you are stupefied with drink already, miserable man, and now not what you say. Go, go; and beware the drummer!"

"Experience is a good guide," the fellow called after the retiring Middleton; and then turning with a chuckling laugh, like one well satisfied with himself, he made the best of his way toward the shop of the sutler.

A hundred times in the course of that

night did Middleton fancy that the communication of the miscreant was entitled to some attention, and as often did he reject the idea as too wild and visionary for another thought. He was awakened early on the following morning, after passing a restless and nearly sleepless night, by his orderly, who came to report that a man was found dead on the parade at no great distance from his quarters. Throwing on his clothes, he proceeded to the spot, and beheld the individual with whom he had held the preceding conference, in the precise situation in which he had first been found.

The miserable wretch had fallen a victim to his intemperance. This revolting fact was sufficiently proclaimed by his obtruding eyeballs, his bloated countenance, and the nearly insufferable odors that were then exhaling from his carcass. Disgusted with the odious spectacle, the youth was turning from the sight, after ordering the corpse to be removed, when the position of one of the dead man's hands struck him. On examination, he found the forefinger extended, as if in the act of writing in the sand, with the following incomplete sentence, nearly illegible, but yet in a state to be deciphered: "Captain, it is true, as I am a gentle——" He had either died, or fallen into a sleep, the fore-runner of his death before the latter word was finished.

Concealing this fact from the others Middleton repeated his orders and departed. The pertinacity of the deceased, and all the circumstances united, induced him to set on foot some secret inquiries. He found that a family answering the description which had been given him had in fact passed the place the day of his nuptials. They were traced along the margin of the Mississippi for some distance, until they took boat and ascended the river to its confluence with the Missouri. Here they disappeared, like hundreds of others, in pursuit of the hidden wealth of the interior.

Furnished with these facts, Middleton detailed a small guard of his most trusty men, took leave of Don Augustine without declaring his hopes or his fears, and

having arrived at the indicated point he pushed into the wilderness in pursuit. It was not difficult to trace a train like that of Ishmael until he was assured its object lay far beyond the usual limits of the settlements. This circumstance in itself quickened his suspicions and gave additional force to his hopes of final success.

After getting beyond the assistance of verbal directions, the anxious husband had recourse to the usual signs of a trail, in order to follow the fugitives. This he also found a task of no difficulty, until he reached the hard and unyielding soil of the rolling prairies. Here, indeed, he was completely at fault. He found himself, at length, compelled to divide his followers, appointing a place of rendezvous at a distant day; and to endeavor to find the lost trail by multiplying, as much as possible, the number of his eyes. He had been alone a week, when accident brought him in contact with the trapper and the bee-hunter. Part of their interview has been related, and the reader can readily imagine the explanations that succeeded the tale he recounted, and which led, as has already been seen, to the recovery of his bride.

CHAPTER XVI.

"These likelihoods confirm her flight from hence: Therefore, I pray you, stay not to discourse, But mount you presently."—SHAKESPEARE.

AN hour had slid by in hasty and nearly incoherent questions and answers, before Middleton, hanging over his recovered treasure with that sort of jealous watchfulness with which a miser would regard his hords, closed the disjointed narrative of his own proceedings by demanding:

"And you, my Inez—in what manner were you treated?"

"In everything, but the great injustice they did in separating me so forcibly from my friends, as well, perhaps, as the circumstances of my captors would allow. I think the man, who is certainly the master here, is but a new beginner in wickedness. He quarreled frightfully in my presence with the wretch who seized me,

and then they made an impious bargain, to which I was compelled to acquiesce, and to which they bound me, as well as themselves, by oaths. Ah! Middleton, I fear the heretics are not so heedful of their vows as we who are nurtured in the bosom of the true Church!"

"Believe it not; these villains are of no religion! Did they forswear themselves?"

"No, not perjured; but was it not awful to call upon the good God to witness so sinful a compact?"

"And so we think, Inez, as truly as the most virtuous cardinal of Rome. But how did they observe their oath, and what was its purport?"

"They conditioned to leave me unmolested, and free from their odious presence, provided I would give a pledge to make no effort to escape; and that I would not even show myself until a time that my masters saw fit to name."

"And that time?" demanded the impatient Middleton, who so well knew the religious scruples of his wife—"that time?"

"It is already passed. I was sworn by my patron saint, and faithfully did I keep the vow until the man they call Ishmael forgot the terms by offering violence. I then made my appearance on the rock, for the time too was passed; though I even think Father Ignatius would have absolved me from the vow on account of the treachery of my keepers."

"If he had not," muttered the youth between his compressed teeth, "I would have absolved him forever from his spiritual care of your conscience!"

"You, Middleton!" returned his wife, looking up into his flushed face, while a bright flush suffused her own sweet countenance; "you may *receive* my vows, but surely you can have no power to *absolve* me from their observance!"

"No, no, no. Inez, you are right. I know but little of these conscientious subtilities, and I am anything but a priest; yet tell me, what has induced these monsters to play this desperate game—to trifle thus with my happiness?"

"You know my ignorance of the world

and how ill I am qualified to furnish reasons for the conduct of beings so different from any I have ever seen before. But does not love of money drive men to acts even worse than this? I believe they thought that an aged and wealthy father could be tempted to pay them a rich ransom for his child; and perhaps," she added, stealing an inquiring glance through her tears at the attentive Middleton, "they counted something on the fresh affections of a bridegroom."

"They might have extracted the blood from my heart drop by drop!"

"Yes," resumed his young and timid wife, instantly withdrawing the stolen look she had hazarded, and hurriedly pursuing the train of the discourse, as if glad to make him forget the liberty she had just taken; "I have been told there are men so base as to perjure themselves at the altar in order to command the gold of ignorant and confiding girls; and if love of money will lead to such baseness, we may surely expect it will hurry those who devote themselves to gain into acts of lesser fraud."

"It must be so; and now, Inez, though I am here to guard you with my life, and we are in possession of this rock, our difficulties, perhaps our dangers, are not ended. You will summon all your courage to meet the trial, and prove yourself a soldier's wife, my Inez?"

"I am ready to depart this instant. The letter you sent by the physician had prepared me to hope for the best, and I have everything arranged for flight at the shortest warning."

"Let us, then, leave this place and join our friends."

"Friends!" interrupted Inez, glancing her eyes around the tent in quest of the form of Ellen. "I, too, have a friend who must not be forgotten, but who is pledged to pass the remainder of her life with us. She is gone!"

Middleton gently led her from the spot, as he smilingly answered—

"She may have had, like myself, her own private communications for some favored ear."

The young man had not, however, done

justice to the motives of Ellen Wade. The sensitive and intelligent girl had readily perceived how little her presence was necessary in the interview that has just been related, and had retired with that intuitive delicacy of feeling which seems to belong more properly to her sex. She was now to be seen seated on a point of the rock, with her person so entirely enveloped in her dress as to conceal her features. Here she had remained for near an hour, no one approaching to address her, and, as it appeared to her own quick and jealous eyes, totally unobserved. In the latter particular, however, even the vigilance of the quick-sighted Ellen was deceived.

The first act of Paul Hover, on finding himself the master of Ishmael's citadel, had been to sound the note of victory, after the quaint and ludicrous manner that is so often practiced among the borderers of the West. Flapping his sides with his hands, as the conquering gamecock is wont to do with his wings, he raised a loud and laughable imitation of the exultation of this bird; a cry which might have proved a dangerous challenge had any one of the athletic sons of the squatter been within hearing.

"This has been a regular knock-down and drag-out," he cried, "and no bones broke!—How now, old trapper! you have been one of your training, platoon, rank-and-file soldiers in your day, and have seen forts taken and batteries stormed before this—am I right?"

"Ay, ay, that have I," answered the old man, who still maintained his post at the foot of the rock, so little disturbed by what he had just witnessed as to return the grin of Paul with a hearty indulgence in his own silent and peculiar laughter; "you have gone through the exploit like men!"

"Now, tell me, is it not in rule to call over the names of the living, and to bury the dead after every bloody battle?"

"Some did and other some didn't. When Sir William pushed the German, Dieskau, through the defiles at the foot of the Hori——"

"Your Sir William was a drone to Sir

Paul, and knew nothing of regularity. So here begins the roll-call—by-the-by, old man, what between bee-hunting and buffalo-humps, and certain other matters, I have been too busy to ask your name; for I intend to begin with my rear-guard, well knowing that my man in front is to busy to answer."

"Lord, lad, I've been called in my time by as many names as there are people among whom I've dwelt. Now the Delawares named me for my eyes, and I was called after the far-sighted hawk. Then, ag'in, the settlers in the Otsego hills christened me anew from the fashion of my leggings; and various have been the names by which I have gone through life; but little will it matter, when the time shall come that all are to be mustered face to face, by what titles a mortal has played his part! I humbly trust I shall be able to answer to any of mine in a loud and manly voice."

Paul paid little or no attention to this reply, more than half of which was lost in the distance, but, pursuing the humor of the moment, he called out in a stentorian voice to the naturalist to answer to his name. Dr. Battius had not thought it necessary to push his success beyond the comfortable niche which accident had so opportunely formed for his protection, and in which he now reposed from his labors with a pleasing consciousness of security, added to great exultation at the possession of the botanical treasure already mentioned.

"Mount, mount, my worthy mole-catcher! come and behold the prospect of skirting Ishmael; come and look Nature boldly in the face, and not go sneaking any longer among the prairie-grass and mullein-tops, like a gobbler nibbling for grasshoppers."

The mouth of the light-hearted and reckless bee-hunter was instantly closed, and he was rendered as mute as he had just been boisterous and talkative, by the appearance of Ellen Wade. When the melancholy maiden took her seat on the point of the rock as mentioned, Paul affected to employ himself in conducting a close inspection of the household effects of

the squatter. He rummaged the drawers of Esther with no delicate hands, scattered the rustic finery of her girls on the ground without the least deference to its quality or elegance, and tossed her pots and kettles here and there as though they had been vessels of wood instead of iron. All this industry was, however, manifestly without an object. He reserved nothing for himself, not even appearing conscious of the nature of the articles which suffered by his familiarity. When he had examined the inside of every cabin, taken a fresh survey of the spot where he had confined the children, and where he had thoroughly secured them with cords, and kicked one of the pails of the woman like a foot-ball fifty feet into the air in sheer wantonness, he returned to the edge of the rock, and, thrusting both his hands through his wampum belt, he began to whistle the "Kentucky Hunters" as diligently as if he had been hired to supply his auditors with music by the hour. In this manner passed the remainder of the time until Middleton, as has been related, led Inez forth from the tent, and gave a new direction to the thoughts of the whole party. He summoned Paul from his flourish of music, tore the doctor from the study of his plant, and, as acknowledged leader, gave the necessary orders for immediate departure.

In the bustle and confusion that were likely to succeed such a mandate, there was little opportunity to indulge in complaints or reflections. As the adventurers had not come unprepared for victory, each individual employed himself in such offices as were best adapted to his strength and situation. The trapper had already made himself master of the patient Asinus, who was quietly feeding at no great distance from the rock, and he was now busy in fitting his back with the complicated machinery which Dr. Battius saw fit to term a saddle of his own invention. The naturalist himself seized upon his portfolios, herbals and collection of insects, which he quickly transferred from the encampment of the squatter to certain pockets in the aforesaid ingenious invention, and which the trapper as uniformly cast away

the moment his back was turned. Paul showed his dexterity in removing such light articles as Inez and Ellen had prepared for their flight to the foot of the citadel; while Middleton, after mingling threats and promises in order to induce the children to remain quietly in their bondage, assisted the females to descend. As time began to press upon them, and there was great danger of Ishmael's returning, these several movements were made with singular industry and dispatch.

The trapper bestowed such articles as he conceived were necessary to the comfort of the weaker and more delicate members of the party, in those pockets from which he had so unceremoniously expelled the treasures of the unconscious naturalist, and then gave way for Middleton to place Inez in one of those seats which he had prepared on the back of the animal for her and her companion.

"Go, child," the old man said, motioning to Ellen to follow the example of the lady, and turning his head a little anxiously to examine the waste behind him. "It cannot be long afore the owner of this place will be coming to look after his household; and he is not a man to give up his property, however obtained, without complaint."

"It is true," cried Middleton; "we have wasted moments that are precious, and have the utmost need of industry."

"Ay, ay, I thought it, and would have said it, captain; but I remembered how your grand'ther used to love to look upon the face of her he led away for a wife, in the days of his youth and his happiness. 'Tis natur', 'tis natur', and 'tis wiser to give way a little before its feelings than to try to stop a current that will have its course."

Ellen advanced to the side of the beast, and seizing Inez by the hand, she said, with heart-felt warmth, after struggling to suppress an emotion that nearly choked her—

"God bless you, sweet lady! I hope you will forget and forgive the wrongs you have received from my uncle——"

The humbled and sorrowful girl could say no more, her voice becoming entirely

inaudible in an ungovernable burst of grief.

"How is this?" cried Middleton; "did you not say, Inez, that this excellent young woman was to accompany us, and to live with us for the remainder of her life; or, at least, until she found some more agreeable residence for herself?"

"I did; and I still hope it. She has always given me reason to believe that, after having shown so much commiseration and friendship in my misery, she would not desert me, should happier times return."

"I cannot—I ought not," continued Ellen, getting the better of her momentary weakness. "It has pleased God to cast my lot among these people, and I ought not to quit them. It would be adding the appearance of treachery to what will already seem bad enough, with one of his opinions. He has been kind to me, an orphan, after his rough customs, and I cannot steal from him at such a moment."

"She is just as much a relation of skirting Ishmael as I am a bishop!" said Paul, with a loud hem, as if his throat wanted clearing. "If the old fellow has done the honest thing by her, in giving her a morsel of venison now and then, or a spoon around his hominy-dish, hasn't she paid him in teaching the young devils to read their Bible, or in helping old Esther to put her finery in shape and fashion? Tell me that a drone has a sting, and I'll believe you as easily as I will that this young woman is a debtor to any of the tribe of Bush!"

"It is but little matter who owes me, or where I am in debt. There are none to care for a girl who is fatherless and motherless, and whose nearest kin are the offcasts of all honest people. No, no; go, lady, and Heaven forever bless you! I am better here, in this desert, where there are none to know my shame."

"Now, old trapper," retorted Paul, "this is what I call knowing which way the wind blows! You ar' a man that has seen life, and you know something of fashions; I put it to your judgment plainly, isn't it in the nature of things for the hive to swarm when the young get their growth, and, if children will quit their

parents, ought one who is of no kith or kin——"

"Hist!" interrupted the man he addressed. "Hector is discontented. Say it out plainly, pup; what is it, dog—what is it?"

The venerable hound had risen, and was sweeping the fresh breeze which continued to sweep heavily over the prairie. At the words of his master he growled and contracted the muscles of his lips, as if half disposed to threaten with the remnants of his teeth. The younger dog, who was resting after the chase of the morning, also made some signs that his nose detected a taint in the air, and then the two resumed their slumbers, as if they had done enough.

The trapper seized the bridle of the ass, and cried, urging the beast onward:

"There is no time for words. The squatter and his brood are within a mile or two of this blessed spot!"

Middleton lost all recollection of Ellen in the danger which now so imminently beset his recovered bride; nor is it necessary to add that Dr. Battius did not wait for a second admonition to commence his retreat.

Following the route indicated by the old man they turned the rock in a body, and pursued their way as fast as possible across the prairie under the favor of the cover it afforded.

Paul Hover, however, remained in his tracks, sullenly leaning on his rifle. Near a minute had elapsed before he was observed by Ellen, who had buried her face in her hands to conceal her fancied desolation from herself.

"Why do you not fly?" the weeping girl exclaimed, the instant she perceived she was not alone.

"I am not used to it."

"My uncle will soon be here! you have nothing to hope from his pity."

"Nor from that of his niece, I reckon. Let him come; he can only knock me on the head!"

"Paul, Paul, if you love me, fly!"

"Alone!—if I do, may I be——"

"If you value your life, fly!"

"I value it not compared to you."

"Paul!"

"Ellen!"

She extended both her hands, and burst into another and a still more violent flood of tears. The bee-hunter put one of his sturdy arms around her waist, and in another moment he was urging her over the plain in rapid pursuit of their flying friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon.—Do not bid me speak;
See, and then speak yourselves."

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE little run which supplied the family of the squatter with water, and nourished the trees and bushes that grew near the base of the rocky eminence, took its rise at no great distance from the latter, in a small thicket of cotton-wood and vines. Hither, then, the trapper directed the flight, as to the place affording the only available cover in so pressing an emergency. It will be remembered that the sagacity of the old man, which, from long practice in similar scenes, amounted nearly to an instinct in all cases of sudden danger, had first induced him to take this course, as it placed the hill between them and the approaching party. Favored by this circumstance, he succeeded in reaching the bushes in sufficient time; and Paul Hover had just hurried the breathless Ellen into the tangled bush as Ishmael gained the summit of the rock in the manner already described, where he stood like a man momentarily bereft of sense, gazing at the confusion which had been created among his chattels, or at his gagged and bound children, who had been safely bestowed, by the forethought of the bee-hunter, under the cover of a bark roof, in a sort of irregular pile. A long rifle would have thrown a bullet from the height on which the squatter now stood into the very cover where the fugitives who had wrought all this mischief were clustered.

The trapper was the first to speak, as the man on whose intelligence and experience they all depended for counsel, after

running his eye over the different individuals who gathered about him, in order to see that none were missing.

"Ah! natur' is natur', and has done its work!" he said, nodding to the exulting Paul with a smile of approbation. "I thought it would be hard for those who had so often met in fair and foul, by starlight and under the clouded moon, to part at last in anger. Now is there little time to lose in talk, and everything to gain by industry! It cannot be long afore some of yonder brood will be nosing along the 'arth for our trail, and should they find it, as find it they surely will, and should they push us to stand on our courage, the dispute must be settled with the rifle; which may he in heaven forbid!—Captain, can you lead us to the place where any of your warriors lie? For the stout sons of the squatter will make a manly brush of it, or I am but little of a judge in warlike dispositions!"

"The place of rendezvous is many leagues from this, on the banks of La Platte."

"It is bad—it is bad. If fighting is to be done, it is always wise to enter on it on equal terms. But what has one so near his time to do with ill blood and hot blood at his heart! Listen to what a gray head and some experience have to offer, and then if any among you can point out a wiser fashion for a retreat, we can just follow his design and forget that I have spoken. This thicket stretches for near a mile as it may be slanting from the rock, and leads toward the sunset instead of the settlements."

"Enough, enough," cried Middleton, too impatient to wait until the deliberate and perhaps loquacious old man could end his minute explanation. "Time is too precious for words. Let us fly."

The trapper made a gesture of compliance, and, turning in his tracks, he led Asinus across the trembling earth of the swale, and quickly emerged on the hard ground on the side opposite to the encampment of the squatter.

"If old Ishmael gets a squint at that highway through the brush," cried Paul, casting, as he left the place, a hasty glance

at the broad trail the party had made through the thicket, "he'll need no finger-board to tell him which way his road lies. But let him follow! I know the vagabond would gladly cross his breed with a little honest blood, but if any son of his ever gets to be the husband of——"

"Hush, Paul, hush!" said the terrified young woman, who leaned on his arm for support; "your voice might be heard."

The bee-hunter was silent, though he did not cease to cast ominous looks behind him as they flew along the edge of the run, which sufficiently betrayed the belligerent condition of his mind. As each one was busy for himself, but a few minutes elapsed before the party rose a swell of the prairie and descending without a moment's delay on the opposite side, they were at once removed from every danger of being seen by the sons of Ishmael, unless the pursuers should happen to fall upon their trail. The old man now profited by the formation of the land to take another direction with a view to elude pursuit, as a vessel changes her course in fogs and darkness to escape from the vigilance of her enemies.

Two hours passed in the utmost diligence enabled them to make a half circuit around the rock, and to reach a point that was exactly opposite to the original direction of their flight. To most of the fugitives their situation was as entirely unknown as is that of a ship in the middle of the ocean to the uninstructed voyager; but the old man proceeded at every turn, and through every bottom with a decision that inspired his followers with confidence, as it spoke favorably of his own knowledge of the localities. His hound, stopping now and then to catch the expression of his eye, had preceded the trapper throughout the whole distance with as much certainty as though a previous and intelligible communion between them had established the route by which they were to proceed. But, at the expiration of the time just named, the dog suddenly came to a stand, and then, seating himself on the prairie, he snuffed the air a moment, and began a low and piteous whining.

"Ay—pup—ay. I know the spot, and reason there is to remember it well!" said the old man, stopping by the side of his uneasy associate, until those who followed had time to come up. "Now, yonder is a thicket before us," he continued, pointing forward, "where we may lie till tall trees grow on these naked fields afore any of the squatter's kin will venture to molest us."

"This is the spot where the body of the dead man lay!" cried Middleton, examining the place with an eye that revolted at the recollection.

"The very same. But whether his friends have put him in the bosom of the ground or not, remains to be seen. The hound knows the scent, but seems to be a little at a loss, too. It is therefore necessary that you advance, friend bee-hunter, to examine, while I tarry to keep the dogs from complaining in too loud a voice."

"I!" exclaimed Paul, thrusting his hand into his shaggy locks, like one who thought it prudent to hesitate before he undertook so formidable an adventure. "Now, hark'ee, old trapper; I've stood in my thinnest cottons in the midst of many a swarm that had lost its queen-bee without winking, and let me tell you the man who can do that is not likely to fear any living son of skirting Ishmael; but as to meddling with dead men's bones, why it is neither my calling nor my inclination; so, after thanking you for the favor of your choice, as they say when they make a man corporal in Kentucky, I decline serving."

The old man turned a disappointed look toward Middleton, who was too much occupied in solacing Inez to observe his embarrassment, which was, however, suddenly relieved from a quarter whence, from previous circumstances, there was little reason to expect such demonstration of fortitude.

Dr. Battius had rendered himself a little remarkable throughout the whole of the preceding retreat for the exceeding diligence with which he had labored to effect that desirable object. So very conspicuous was his zeal, indeed, as to have entirely got the better of all his ordinary

predilections. The worthy naturalist belonged to that species of discoverers who make the worst possible traveling companions to a man who has reason to be in a hurry. No stone, no bush, no plant, is ever suffered to escape the examination of their vigilant eyes, and thunder may mutter, and rain fall, without disturbing the abstraction of their reveries. Not so, however, with the disciple of Linnæus, during the momentous period that it remained a mooted point at the tribunal of his better judgment, whether the stout descendants of the squatter were not likely to dispute his right to traverse the prairie in freedom. The highest-blooded and best-trained hound, with his game in view, could not have run with an eye more riveted than that with which the doctor had pursued his curvilinear course. It was perhaps lucky for his fortitude that he was ignorant of the artifice of the trapper in leading them around the citadel of Ishmael, and that he had imbibed the soothing impression that every inch of the prairie he traversed was just so much added to the distance between his own person and the detested rock. Notwithstanding the momentary shock he certainly experienced when he discovered this error, he now boldly volunteered to enter the thicket in which there was some reason to believe the body of the murdered Asa still lay. Perhaps the naturalist was urged to show his spirit on this occasion by some secret consciousness that his excessive industry in the retreat might be liable to misconstruction; and it is certain that whatever might be his peculiar notions of danger from the quick, his habits and his knowledge had placed him far above the apprehension of suffering harm from any communication with the dead.

"If there is any service to be performed which requires the perfect command of the nervous system," said the man of science with a look that was slightly blustering, "you have only to give a direction to his intellectual faculties, and here stands one on whose physical powers you may depend."

"The man is given to speak in para-

bles," muttered the single-minded trapper; "but I conclude there is always some meaning hidden in his words, though it is as hard to find sense in his speeches as to discover three eagles on the same tree. It will be wise, friend, to make a cover, lest the sons of the squatter should be out skirting on our trial, and, as you well know, there is some reason to fear yonder thicket contains a sight that may horrify a woman's mind. Are you man enough to look death in the face, or shall I run the risk of the hounds raising an outcry, and go in myself? You see the pup is willing to run in with an open mouth already."

"Am I man enough! Venerable trapper, our communications have a recent origin, or thy interrogatory might have a tendency to embroil us in an angry disputation. Am I man enough! I claim to be of the *class*, mammalia; *order*, primates; *genus*, homo! Such are my physical attributes; of my moral properties let posterity speak; it becomes me to be mute."

"Physic may do for such as relish it; to my taste and judgment it is neither palatable nor healthy; but morals never did harm to any living mortal, be it that he was a sojourner in the forest, or a dweller in the midst of glazed windows and smoking chimneys. It is only a few hard words that divide us, friend; for I am of opinion that with use and freedom we should come to understand one another, and mainly settle down into the same judgments of mankind, and of the ways of the world—Quiet, Hector, quiet! what ruffles your temper, pup; is it not used to the scent of human blood?"

The doctor bestowed a gracious but commiserating smile on the philosopher of Nature, as he retrograded a step or two from the place whither he had been impelled by his excess of spirit, in order to reply with less expenditure of breath, and with a greater freedom of air and attitude.

"A homo is certainly a homo," he said, stretching forth an arm in an argumentative manner; "so far as the animal functions extend, there are the connecting links of harmony, order, conformity, and design, between the whole genus; but

there the resemblance ends. Man may be degraded to the very margin of the line which separates him from the brute, by ignorance; or he may be elevated to a communion with the great Master-spirit of all, by knowledge; nay, I know not, if time and opportunity were given him, but he might become the master of all learning, and consequently equal to the great moving principle."

The old man, who stood leaning on his rifle in a thoughtful attitude, shook his head as he answered with a native steadiness that entirely eclipsed the imposing air which his antagonist had seen fit to assume.

"This is neither more nor less than human wickedness! Here have I been a dweller on the earth for four-score-and-six changes of the seasons, and all that time have I looked at the growing and the dying trees, and yet do I not know the reason why the bud starts under the summer sun, or the leaf falls when it is pinched by the frosts. Your l'arning, though it is man's boast, is folly in the eyes of him who sits in the clouds, and looks down in sorrow at the pride and vanity of his creatur's. Many is the hour that I've passed lying in the shades of the woods or stretched upon the hills of these open fields, looking up into the blue skies, where I could fancy the Great One had taken his stand, and was solemnizing on the waywardness of man and brute below, as I myself had often looked at the ants tumbling over each other in their eagerness, though in a way and a fashion more suited to his mightiness and power. Knowledge! It is his plaything. Say, you who think it is so easy to climb into the judgment-seat above, can you tell me anything of the beginning and the end? Nay, you're a dealer in ailings and cures; what is life, and what is death? Why does the eagle live so long, and why is the time of the butterfly so short? Tell me a simpler thing: why is the hound so uneasy, while you, who have passed your days in looking into books, can see no reason to be disturbed?"

The doctor, who had been a little astounded by the dignity and energy of the

old man, drew a long breath, like a sullen wrestler who is just released from the throttling grasp of his antagonist, and seized on the opportunity of the pause to reply:

"It is his instinct."

"And what is the gift of instinct?"

"An inferior gradation of reason. A sort of mysterious combination of thought and matter."

"And what is that which you call thought?"

"Venerable venator, this is a method of reasoning which sets at naught the uses of definitions, and such as I do assure you is not at all tolerated in the schools."

"Then is there more cunning in your schools than I had thought, for it is a certain method of showing them their vanity," returned the trapper, suddenly abandoning a discussion from which the naturalist was just beginning to anticipate great delight, by turning to his dog, whose restlessness he attempted to appease by playing with his ears. "This is foolish, Hector; more like an untamed pup than a sensible hound; one who has got his education by hard experience and not by nosing over the trails of other dogs, as a boy in the settlements follows on the track of his masters, be it right or be it wrong. Well, friend, you who can do so much, are you equal to looking into the thicket; or must I go in myself?"

The doctor again assumed his air of resolution, and without further parlarce proceeded to do as desired. The dogs were so far restrained by the remonstrances of the old man as to confine their noise to low but often repeated whinings. When they saw the naturalist advance, the pup, however, broke through all restraint and made a swift circuit around his person, scenting the earth as he proceeded, and, returning to his companion, he howled aloud.

"The squatter and his brood have left a strong scent on the earth," said the old man, watching as he spoke for some signal from his learned pioneer to follow; "I hope yonder school-bred man knows enough to remember the errand on which I have sent him."

Dr. Battus had already disappeared in the bushes, and the trapper was beginning to betray additional evidences of impatience, when the person of the former was seen retiring from the thicket backward, with his face fastened on the place he had just left, as if his look was bound in the thralldom of some charm.

"Here is something skeary by the wildness of the creatur's countenance!" exclaimed the old man, relinquishing his hold of Hector, and moving stoutly to the side of the totally unconscious naturalist. "How is it, friend; have you found a new leaf in your book of wisdom?"

"It is a basilisk!" muttered the doctor, whose altered visage betrayed the utter confusion which beset his faculties. An animal of the *order serpens*. I had thought its attributes were fabulous, but mighty Nature is equal to all that man can imagine!"

"What is't? what is't? The snakes of the prairies are harmless, unless it be now and then an angered rattler, and he always gives you notice with his tail afore he works his mischief with his fangs. Lord, Lord, what a humbling thing is fear! Here is one who in common delivers words too big for a humble mouth to hold, so much beside himself that his voice is as shrill as the whistle of the whippoorwill! Courage!—what is it man?—what is it?"

"A prodigy! a *lusus naturee*! a monster that Nature has delighted to form in order to exhibit her power! Never before have I witnessed such an utter confusion in her laws, or a specimen that so completely bids defiance to the distinctions of *class* and *genera*. Let me record its appearance," fumbling for his tablets with hands that trembled too much to perform their office, "while time and opportunity are allowed—*eyes*, entralling; *color*, various, complex, and profound——"

"One would think the man was crazed with his entralling looks and piebald colors!" interrupted the discontented trapper, who began to grow a little uneasy that his party was all this time neglecting to seek the protection of some cover. "If there is a reptile in the brush,

show me the creatur', and should it refuse to depart peaceably, why there must be a quarrel for the possession of the place."

"There!" said the doctor, pointing into a dense mass of the thicket, to a spot within fifty feet of that where they both stood. The trapper turned his look with perfect composure in the required direction, but the instant his practiced glance met the object which had so utterly upset the philosophy of the naturalist, he gave a start himself, threw his rifle rapidly forward, and as instantly recovered it, as if a second flash of thought convinced him he was wrong. Neither the instinctive movement nor the sudden recollection was without a sufficient object. At the very margin of the thicket and in absolute contact with the earth, lay an animate ball that might easily, by the singularity and fierceness of its aspect, have justified the disturbed condition of the naturalist's mind. It were difficult to describe the shape or colors of this extraordinary substance, except to say, in general terms, that it was nearly spherical, and exhibited all the hues of the rainbow, intermingled without reference to harmony, and without any very ostensible design. The predominant hues were a black and bright vermillion. With these, however, the several tints of white, yellow and crimson were strangely and wildly blended. Had this been all it would have been difficult to have pronounced that the object was possessed of life, for it lay motionless as any stone; but a pair of dark, glaring and moving eyeballs, which watched with jealousy the smallest movements of the trapper and his companion, sufficiently established the important fact of its possessing vitality.

"Your reptile is a scouter, or I'm no judge of Indian paints and Indian deviltries!" muttered the old man, dropping the butt of his weapon to the ground, and gazing with a steady eye at the frightful object, as he leaned on its barrel, in an attitude of great composure. "He wants to face us out of sight and reason, and make us think the head of a red-skin is a stone covered with the autumn leaf; or he has some other devilish artifice in his mind!"

"Is the animal human?" demanded the doctor, "of the *genus homo*? I had fancied it a nondescript."

"It's as human, and as mortal, too, as a warrior of these prairies is ever known to be. I have seen the time when a red-skin would have shown a foolish daring to peep out of his ambushment in that fashion on a hunter I could name, but who is too old now, and too near his time, to be anything better than a miserable trapper. It will be well to speak to the imp, and to let him know he deals with men whose beards are grown. Come forth from your cover, friend," he continued, in the language of the extensive tribes of the Dahcotahs; "there is room on the prairie for another warrior."

The eyes appeared to glare more fiercely than before, but the mass which, according to the trapper's opinion, was neither more nor less than a human head, shorn, as usual among the warriors of the West, of its hair, still continued without motion or any other sign of life.

"It is a mistake!" exclaimed the doctor. "The animal is not even of the *class mammalia*, much less a man."

"So much for your knowledge!" returned the trapper, laughing with great exultation. "So much for the l'arning of one who has looked into so many books that his eyes are not able to tell a moose from a wild-cat! Now, my Hector, here, is a dog of education after his fashion, and, though the meanest primer in the settlements would puzzle his information, you could not cheat the hound in a matter like this. As you think the object no man, you shall see his whole formation, and then let an ignorant old trapper, who never willingly passed a day within reach of a spelling-book in his life, know by what name to call it. Mind, I mean no violence; but just to start the devil from his ambushment."

The trapper very deliberately examined the priming of his rifle, taking care to make as great a parade as possible of his hostile intentions, in going through the necessary evolutions with the weapon. When he thought the stranger began to apprehend some danger, he very deliber-

ately presented the piece, and called aloud:

"Now, friend, I am all for peace, or all for war, as you may say. No! well it is no man, as the wiser one here says, and there can be no harm in just firing into a bunch of leaves."

The muzzle of the rifle fell as he concluded, and the weapon was gradually setting into a steady, and what would easily have proved a fatal aim, when a tall Indian sprang from beneath that bed of leaves and brush, which he had collected about his person at the approach of the party, and stood upright, uttering the exclamation:

"Wagh!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove."

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE trapper, who had meditated no violence, dropped his rifle again, and laughing at the success of his experiment, with great seeming self-complacency, he drew the astounded gaze of the naturalist from the person of the savage to himself, by saying:

"The imps will lie for hours, like sleeping alligators, brooding their deviltries in dreams and other craftiness, until such a time as they see some real danger is at hand, and then they look to themselves the same as other mortals. But this is a scout in his war-paint! There should be more of his tribe at no great distance. Let us draw the truth out of him; for an unlucky war-party may prove more dangerous to us than a visit from the whole family of the squatter."

"It is truly a desperate and a dangerous species!" said the doctor, relieving his amazement by a breath that seemed to exhaust his lungs of air; "a violent race, and one that is difficult to define or class, within the usual boundaries of definition. "Speak to him, therefore; but let thy words be strong in amity."

The old man cast a keen eye on every

side of him, to ascertain the important particular whether the stranger was supported by any associates, and then making the usual signs of peace, by exhibiting the palm of his naked hand, he boldly advanced. In the meantime the Indian betrayed no evidence of uneasiness. He suffered the trapper to draw nigh, maintaining by his own mien and attitude a striking air of dignity and fearlessness. Perhaps the wary warrior also knew that, owing to the difference in their weapons, he should be placed more on an equality by being brought nearer to the strangers.

As a description of this individual may furnish some idea of the personal appearance of a whole race, it may be well to detain the narrative, in order to present it to the reader, in our hasty and imperfect manner. Would the truant eyes of Allston or Greenough turn but for a time from their gaze at the models of antiquity, to contemplate this wronged and humbled people, little would be left for such inferior artists as ourselves to delineate.

The Indian in question was in every particular a warrior of fine stature and admirable proportions. As he cast aside his mask, composed of such parti-colored leaves as he had hurriedly collected, his countenance appeared in all the gravity, the dignity, and it may be added, in the terror of his profession. The outlines of his lineaments were strikingly noble, and nearly approaching to Roman, though the secondary features of his face were slightly marked with the well-known traces of his Asiatic origin. The peculiar tint of the skin, which in itself is so well designed to aid the effect of a martial expression, had received an additional aspect of wild ferocity from the colors of the war-paint.

But, as if he disdained the usual artifices of his people, he bore none of these strange and horrid devices with which the children of the forest are accustomed, like the more civilized heroes of the moustache, to back their reputation for courage, contenting himself with a broad and deep shadowing of black, that served as a sufficient and admirable foil to the brighter gleamings of his native swarthinness. His head was,

as usual, shaved to the crown, where a large and gallant scalp-lock seemed to challenge the grasp of his enemies. The ornaments that were ordinarily pendent from the cartilages of his ears had been removed, on account of his present pursuit. His body, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, was nearly naked, and the portion which was clad bore a vestment no warmer than a light robe of the finest dressed deer-skin, beautifully stained with a rude design of some daring exploit, and which was carelessly worn, as if more in pride than from any unmanly regard to comfort. His leggings were of bright scarlet cloth, the only evidence about his person that he had held communion with the traders of the pale-faces. But as if to furnish some offset to this solitary submission to a womanish vanity they were fearfully fringed from the gartered knee to the bottom of the moccasin with the hair of human scalps. He leaned lightly with one hand on a short hickory bow, while the other rather touched than sought support from the long, delicate handle of an ashen lance. A quiver made of the cougar-skin, from which the tail of the animal depended, as a characteristic ornament, was slung at his back; and a shield of hides, quaintly emblazoned with another of his warlike deeds, was suspended from his neck by a thong of sinews.

As the trapper approached, this warrior maintained his calm, upright attitude, discovering neither an eagerness to ascertain the character of those who advanced upon him, nor the smallest wish to avoid a scrutiny in his own person. An eye that was darker and more shining than that of the stag was incessantly glancing, however, from one to another of the stranger party, seemingly never knowing rest for an instant.

"Is my brother far from his village?" demanded the old man, in the Pawnee language, after examining the paint and those other little signs by which a practiced eye knows the tribe of the warrior he encounters in the American deserts, with the same readiness, and by the same sort of mysterious observation, as that by which the seaman knows the distant sail.

"It is farther to the towns of the Big-knives," was the laconic reply.

"Why is a Pawnee-Loup so far from the fork of his own river, without a horse to journey on, and in a spot empty as this?"

"Can the women and children of a pale-face live without the meat of the bison? There was hunger in my lodge."

"My brother is very young to be already the master of a lodge," returned the trapper, looking steadily into the unmoved countenance of the youthful warrior; "but I dare say he is brave, and that many a chief has offered him his daughters for wives. But he has been mistaken," pointing to the arrow which was dangling from the hand that held the bow, "in bringing a loose and barbed arrow-head to kill the buffalo. Do the Pawnees wish the wounds they give their game to rankle?"

"It is good to be ready for the Sioux. Though not in sight a bush may hide him."

"The man is a living proof of the truth of his words," muttered the trapper, in English, "and a close-jointed and gallant-looking lad he is; but far too young for a chief of any importance. It is wise, however, to speak him fair, for a single arm thrown into either party, if we come to blows with the squatter and his brood, may turn the day. "You see my children are weary," he continued, in the dialect of the prairies, pointing as he spoke to the rest of the party, who by this time were also approaching. "We wish to camp and eat. Does my brother claim this spot?"

"The runners from the people on the big river tell us that your nation have traded with the tawny-faces who live beyond the salt-lake, and that the prairies are now the hunting-grounds of the Big-knives!"

"It is true, as I hear also from the hunters and trappers on La Platte. Though it is with the Frenchers, and not with the men who claim to own the Mexicos, that my people have bargained."

"And warriors are going up the Long-river to see that they have not been cheated in what they have bought."

"Ay, that is partly true, too, I fear; and it will not be long before an accursed band of choppers and loggers will be following on their heels, to humble the wilderness which lies so broad and rich on the western banks of the Mississippi; and then the land will be a peopled desert, from the shores of the main sea to the foot of the Rocky Mountains; filled with all the abominations and craft of man, and stripped of the comforts and loveliness it received from the hands of the Lord!"

"And where were the chiefs of the Pawnee-Loups when this bargain was made?" suddenly demanded the youthful warrior, a look of startling fierceness gleaming, at the same instant, athwart his dark visage. "Is a nation to be sold like the skin of a beaver?"

"Right enough—right enough, and where were truth and honesty also? But might is right, according to the fashions of the earth; and what the strong chooses to do, the weak must call justice. If the law of the Wahcondah was as much hearkened to, Pawnee, as the laws of the Long-knives, your right to the prairies would be as good as that of the greatest chief in the settlements to the house which covers his head."

"The skin of the traveler is white," said the young native, laying a finger impressively on the hard and wrinkled hand of the trapper. "Does his heart say one thing and his tongue another?"

"The Wahcondah of a white man has ears, and he shuts them to a lie. Look at my head; it is like a frosted pine, and must soon be laid in the ground. Why then should I wish to meet the Great Spirit face to face, while his countenance is dark upon me."

The Pawnee gracefully threw his shield over one shoulder, and, placing a hand on his chest, he bent his head, in deference to the gray locks exhibited by the trapper; after which his eye became more steady, and his countenance less fierce. Still he maintained every appearance of a distrust and watchfulness that were rather tempered and subdued than forgotten. When this equivocal species of amity was established between the warrior of

the prairies and the experienced old trapper, the latter proceeded to give his directions to Paul concerning the arrangements of the contemplated halt.

While Inez and Ellen were dismounting, and Middleton and the bee-hunter were attending to their comforts, the discourse was continued, sometimes in the language of the natives, but often, as Paul and the doctor mingled their opinions with the two principal speakers, in the English tongue. There was a keen and subtle trial of skill between the Pawnee and the trapper in which each endeavored to discover the objects of the other without betraying his own interest in the investigation. As might be expected when the struggle was between adversaries so equal, the result of the encounter answered the expectations of neither. The latter had put all the interrogatories his ingenuity and practice could suggest concerning the state of the tribe of the Loups, their crops, their store of provisions for the ensuing winter, and their relations with their different warlike neighbors, without extorting any answer which in the slightest degree elucidated the cause of his finding a solitary warrior so far from his people. On the other hand, while the questions of the Indian were far more dignified and delicate, they were equally ingenious. He commented on the state of the trade in peltries, spoke of the good or ill success of many white hunters whom he had either encountered or heard named, and even alluded to the steady march which the nation of its great father, as he cautiously termed the government of the States, was making toward the hunting-grounds of his tribe. It was apparent, however, by the singular mixture of interest, contempt and indignation that were occasionally gleaming through the reserved manner of this warrior, that he knew the strange people who were thus trespassing on his native rights much more by report than by any actual intercourse. This personal ignorance of the whites was as much betrayed by the manner in which he regarded the females, as by the brief but energetic expressions which occasionally escaped him.

While speaking to the trapper he suffered his wandering glances to stray towards the intellectual and nearly infantile beauty of Inez, as one might be supposed to gaze upon the loveliness of an ethereal being. It was very evident that he now saw, for the first time, one of those females of whom the fathers of his tribe so often spoke, and who were considered of such rare excellence as to equal all that savage ingenuity could imagine in the way of loveliness. His observation of Ellen was less marked, but, notwithstanding the warlike and chastened expression of his eye, there was much of the homage which man is made to pay to woman, even in the more cursory look he sometimes turned on her maturer and perhaps more animated beauty. This admiration, however, was so tempered by his habits, and so smothered in the pride of a warrior, as completely to elude every eye but that of the trapper, who was too well skilled in Indian customs, and was too well instructed in the importance of rightly conceiving the character of the stranger, to let the smallest trait or the most trifling of his movements escape him. In the meantime, the unconscious Ellen herself moved about the feeble and less resolute Inez with her accustomed assiduity and tenderness, exhibiting in her frank features those changing emotions of joy and regret which occasionally beset her, as her active mind dwelt on the decided step she had just taken, with the contending doubts and hopes, and possibly with some of the mental vacillation, that was natural to her situation and sex.

Not so Paul; conceiving himself to have obtained the two things dearest to his heart, the possession of Ellen and a triumph over the sons of Ishmael, he now enacted his part in the business of the moment with as much coolness as though he was already leading his willing bride from solemnizing their nuptials before a border magistrate, to the security of his own dwelling. He had hovered around the moving family, during the tedious period of their weary march, concealing himself by day, and seeking interviews with his betrothed as opportunities offered

in the manner already described, until fortune and his own intrepidity had united to render him successful, at the very moment when he was beginning to despair, and he now cared neither for distance, nor violence, nor hardships. To this sanguine fancy and determined resolution all the rest was easily to be achieved. Such were his feelings and such in truth they seemed to be. With his cap cast on one side, and whistling a low air, he thrashed among the bushes, in order to make a place suitable for the females to repose on, while, from time to time, he cast an approving glance at the agile form of Ellen, as she tripped past him, engaged in her own share of the duty.

"And so the Wolf-tribe of the Pawnees have buried the hatchet with their neighbors the Konzas?" said the trapper, pursuing a discourse which he had scarcely permitted to flag, though it had been occasionally interrupted by the different directions with which he occasionally saw fit to interrupt it. (The reader will remember that, while he spoke to the native warrior in his own tongue, he necessarily addressed his white companions in English.) "The Loups and the light-faced red-skins are again friends.—Doctor, that is a tribe of which I'll engage you've often read, and of which many a round lie has been whispered in the ears of the ignorant people who live in the settlements. There was a story of a nation of Welshers, that lived here-away in the prairies, and how they came into the land afore the uneasy-minded man who first let in the Christians to rob the heathens of their inheritance, had ever dreamt that the sun set on a country as big as that it rose from. And how they knew the white ways and spoke with white tongues, and a thousand other follies and idle conceits."

"Have I not heard of them," exclaimed the naturalist, dropping a piece of jerked bison's meat, which he was rather roughly discussing at the moment. "I should be greatly ignorant not to have often dwelt with delight on so beautiful a theory, and one which so triumphantly establishes two positions, which I have often maintained are unanswerable, even

without such living testimony in their favor—viz., that this continent can claim a more remote affinity with civilization than the time of Columbus, and that color is the fruit of climate and condition, and not a regulation of Nature.—Propound the latter question to this Indian gentleman, venerable hunter; he is of a reddish tint himself, and his opinion may be said to make us masters of the two sides of the disputed point."

"Do you think a Pawnee is a reader of books, and a believer of printed lies, like the idlers in the towns?" retorted the old man, laughing. "But it may be as well to humor the likings of the man, which after all, is quite possible, are neither more nor less than his natural gift, and therefore to be followed, although they may be pitied. What does my brother think? all whom he sees here have pale skins, but the Pawnee warriors are red; does he believe that man changes with the season, and that the son is not like his father?"

The young warrior regarded his interrogator for a moment with a steady and deliberating eye; then, raising his finger upward, he answered with dignity:

"The Wahcondah pours the rain from his clouds; when he speaks he shakes the hills; and the fire, which scorches the trees, is the anger of his eye; but he fashioned his children with care and thought. What he has thus made, never alters!"

"Ay, 'tis in the reason of natur' that it should be so, doctor," continued the trapper, when he had interpreted this answer to the disappointed naturalist. "The Pawnees are a wise and a great people, and I'll engage they abound in many a wholesome and honest tradition. The hunters and trappers that I sometimes see speak of a great warrior of your race."

"My tribe are not women. A brave is no stranger in my village."

"Ay; but he they speak of most is a chief far beyond the renown of common warriors, and one that might have done credit to that once mighty but now fallen people, the Delawares of the hills."

"Such a warrior should have a name?"

"They call him Hard-heart, from the stoutness of his resolution; and well is he named, if all I have heard of his deeds be true."

The stranger cast a glance which seemed to read the guileless soul of the old man, as he demanded—

"Has the pale-face seen the partisan of my people?"

"Never. It is not with me now as it used to be some forty years ago, when warfare and bloodshed were my calling and my gifts!"

A loud shout from the reckless Paul interrupted his speech, and at the next moment the bee-hunter appeared, leading an Indian war-horse from the side of the thicket opposite to the one occupied by the party.

"Here is a beast for a red-skin to straddle!" he cried, as he made the animal go through some of its wild paces. "There's not a brigadier in all Kentucky that can call himself master of so sleek and well-jointed a nag! A Spanish saddle, too, like a grandee of the Mexicos! and look at the mane and tail braided and plaited down with little silver balls, as if it were Ellen herself getting her shining hair ready for a dance or a husking frolic! Isn't this a real trotter, old trapper, to eat out of the manger of a savage?"

"Softly, lad, softly. The Loups are famous for their horses, and it is often that you see a warrior on the prairies far better mounted than a Congressman in the settlements. But this, indeed, is a beast that none but a powerful chief should ride! The saddle, as you rightly think, has been sat upon in its day by a great Spanish captain, who has lost it and his life together in some of the battles which this people often fight against the southern provinces. I warrant me, I warrant me the youngster is the son of a great chief; maybe of the mighty Hard-heart, himself!"

During this rude interruption to the discourse, the young Pawnee manifested neither impatience nor displeasure; but when he thought his beast had been the subject of sufficient comment, he very

coolly, and with an air of one accustomed to have his will respected, relieved Paul of the bridle, and, throwing the reins on the neck of the animal, he sprang upon his back with the activity of a professor of the equestrian art. Nothing could be finer or firmer than the seat of the savage. The highly wrought and cumbrous saddle was evidently more for show than use. Indeed, it impeded rather than aided the action of limbs which disdained to seek assistance, or admit of restraint from so womanish inventions as stirrups. The horse, which immediately began to prance, was, like its rider, wild and untutored in all its motions, but while there was so little of art there was all the freedom and grace of Nature in the movement of both. The animal was probably indebted to the blood of Araby for its excellence, through a long pedigree that embraced the steed of Mexico, the Spanish barb, and the Moorish charger. The rider, in obtaining his steed from the provinces of Central America, had also obtained that spirit and grace in controlling him which unite to form the most intrepid and perhaps the most skillful horseman in the world.

Notwithstanding this sudden occupation of his animal, the Pawnee discovered no hasty wish to depart. More at his ease, and possibly more independent, now that he found himself secure of the means of retreat, he rode back and forth, eyeing the different individuals of the party with far greater freedom than before. But at each extremity of his ride, just as the sagacious trapper expected to see him profit by his advantage and fly, he would turn his horse and pass over the same ground, sometimes with the rapidity of the flying deer, and at others more slowly and with greater dignity of mien and attitude. Anxious to ascertain such facts as might have an influence on his future movements, the old man determined to invite him to a renewal of their conference. He therefore made a gesture expressive at the same time of his wish to resume the interrupted discourse, and of his own pacific intentions. The quick eye of the stranger was not slow to note the action, but it was not until a sufficient time had

passed to allow him to debate the prudence of the measure in his own mind, that he seemed willing to trust himself again so near a party that was so much superior to himself in physical power, and consequently one that was able at any instant to command his life, or control his personal liberty. When he did approach nigh enough to converse with facility, it was with a singular mixture of haughtiness and of distrust.

"It is far to the village of the Loups," he said, stretching his arm in a direction contrary to that in which the trapper well knew the tribe dwelt, "and the road is crooked. What has the Big-knife to say?"

"Ay, crooked enough!" muttered the old man in English, "if you are to set out on your journey by that path, but not half so winding as the cunning of an Indian's mind. Say, my brother, do the chiefs of the Pawnees love to see strange faces in their lodges?"

The young warrior bent his head gracefully, though but slightly, over the saddle-bow, as he replied—

"When have my people forgotten to give food to the stranger?"

"If I lead my daughters to the doors of the Loups, will the women take them by the hand; and will the warriors smoke with my young men?"

"The country of the pale-faces is behind them. Why do they journey so far toward the setting sun? Have they lost the path, or are these the women of the white warriors that I hear are wading up the river of the troubled waters?"

"Neither. They who wade the Missouri are the warriors of my great father, who has sent them on his message; but we are peace-runners. The white men and the red are neighbors, and they wish to be friends. Do not the Omahaws visit the Loups when the tomahawk is buried in the path between the two nations?"

"The Omahaws are welcome."

"And the Yanktons, and the burnt-wood Tetons, who live in the elbow of the river 'with muddy water;' do they not come into the lodges of the Loups and smoke?"

"The Tetons are liars!" exclaimed the other. "They dare not shut their eyes in the night. No; they sleep in the sun. See," he added, pointing with fierce triumph to the frightful ornaments of his leggings, "their scalps are so plenty that the Pawnees tread on them! Go; let a Sioux live in banks of snow; the plains and buffaloes are for men!"

"Ah! the secret is out," said the trapper to Middleton, who was an attentive, because a deeply interested, observer of what was passing. "This good-looking young Indian is scouting on the track of the Sioux—you may see it by his arrow-heads and his paint; ay, and by his eye, too; for red-skin lets his natur' follow the business he is on, be it for peace or be it for war.—Quiet, Hector, quiet! Have you never scented a Pawnee afore, pup?—keep down, dog—keep down.—My brother is right. The Sioux are thieves. Men of all colors and nations say it of them, and truly. But the people from the rising sun are not Sioux, and they wish to visit the lodges of the Loups.

"The head of my brother is white," returned the Pawnee, throwing one of those glances at the trapper which were so remarkably expressive of distrust, intelligence and pride; and then pointing, as he continued, toward the eastern horizon, "and his eyes have looked on many things—can he tell me the name of what he sees yonder—is it a buffalo?"

"It looks more like a cloud peeping above the skirt of the plain, with the sunshine lighting its edges. It is the smoke of the heavens."

"It is a hill of the earth, and on its top are the lodges of the pale-faces! Let the women of my brother wash their feet among the people of their own color."

"The eyes of a Pawnee are good if he can see a white-skin so far."

The Indian turned slowly toward the speaker, and after a pause of a moment he sternly demanded—

"Can my brother hunt?"

"Alas! I claim to be no better than a miserable trapper!"

"When the plain is covered with the buffaloes, can he see them?"

"No doubt, no doubt—it is far easier to see than to take a scampering bull."

"And when the birds are flying from the cold, and the clouds are black with their feathers, can he see *them*, too?"

"Ay, ay, it is not hard to find a duck or a goose when millions are darkening the heavens."

"When the snow falls and covers the lodges of the Long-knives, can the stranger see flakes in the air?"

"My eyes are none of the best now," returned the old man, a little resentfully, "but the time has been when I had a name for my sight!"

"The red-skins find the Big-knives as easily as the strangers see the buffalo, or the traveling birds, or the falling snow. Your warriors think the Master of life has made the whole earth white. They are mistaken. They are pale, and it is their own faces that they see. Go! a Pawnee is not blind that he need look long for your people!"

The warrior suddenly paused and bent his face aside, like one who listened with all his faculties absorbed in the act. Then, turning the head of his horse, he rode to the nearest angle of the thicket, and looked intently across the bleak prairie, in a direction opposite to the side on which the party stood. Returning slowly from this unaccountable, and, to his observers, startling procedure, he riveted his eyes on Inez, and paced back and forth several times, with the air of one who maintained a warm struggle on some difficult point in the recesses of his own thoughts. He had drawn the reins of his impatient steed and was seemingly about to speak, when his head again sank on his chest, and he resumed his former attitude of attention. Galloping like a deer to the place of his former observations, he rode for a moment swiftly in short and rapid circles, as if still uncertain of his course, and then darted away like a bird that had been fluttering around its nest before it takes a distant flight. After scouring the plain for a minute he was lost to the eye behind a swell of the land.

The hounds, who had also manifested great uneasiness for some time, followed

him for a little distance, and then terminated their chase by seating themselves on the ground and raising their usual low, whining, and warning howls.

CHAPTER XIX.

"How if he will not stand?"

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE several movements related in the close of the preceding chapter had passed in so short a space of time, that the old man, while he neglected not to note the smallest incident, had no opportunity of expressing his opinion concerning the stranger's motives. After the Pawnee had disappeared, however, he shook his head and muttered, while he walked slowly to the angle of the thicket that the Indian had just quitted—

"There are both scents and sounds in the air, though my miserable senses are not good enough to hear the one or to catch the taint of the other."

"There is nothing to be seen," cried Middleton, who kept close at his side. "My eyes and my ears are good, and yet I can assure you that I neither hear nor see anything."

"Your eyes are good! and you are not deaf!" returned the other, with a slight air of contempt; "no, lad, no, they may be good to see across a church, or to hear a town-bell, but afore you had passed a year in these prairies you would find yourself taking a turkey for a buffalo, or conceiving fifty times that the roar of a buffalo-bull was the thunder of the Lord! There is a deception of Natur' in these naked plains in which the air throws up the images like water, and then it is hard to tell the prairies from a sea. But yonder is a sign that a hunter never fails to know!"

The trapper pointed to a flight of vultures that were sailing over the plain at no great distance, and apparently in the direction in which the Pawnee had riveted his eyes. At first Middleton could not distinguish the small, dark objects that were dotting the dusky clouds; but, as

they came swiftly onward, first their forms and then their heavy, waving wings became distinctly visible.

"Listen," said the trapper, when he had succeeded in making Middleton see the moving column of birds. "Now you hear the buffaloes, or bison, as your knowing doctor sees fit to call them, though buffaloes is their name among all the hunters of these regions. And I conclude that a hunter is a better judge of a beast and of its name," he added, winking to the young soldier, "than any man who has turned over the leaves of a book instead of traveling over the face of the 'arth, in order to find out the natur' of its inhabitants."

"Of their habits, I will grant you," cried the naturalist, who rarely missed an opportunity to agitate any disputed point in his favorite studies. "That is, provided always deference is had to the proper use of definitions, and that they are contemplated with scientific eyes."

"Eyes of a mole! as if any man's eyes were not as good for names as the eyes of any other creatur'. Who named the works of his hand? can you tell me that, with your books and college wisdom? Was it not the first man in the Garden, and is it not a plain consequence that his children inherit his gifts?"

"That is certainly the Mosaic account of the event," said the doctor, "though your reading is by far too liberal."

"My reading! nay, if you suppose that I have wasted my time in schools, you do such a wrong to my knowledge as one mortal should never lay to the door of another without sufficient reason. If I have ever craved the art of reading, it has been that I might better know the sayings of the book you name, for it is a book which speaks in every line according to human feelings, and therein according to reason."

"And do you then believe," said the doctor, a little provoked by the dogmatism of his stubborn adversary, and perhaps secretly too confident in his own more liberal though scarcely as profitable attainments, "do you then believe that all these beasts were literally collected in a

garden to be enrolled in the nomenclature of the first man?"

"Why not? I understand your meaning; for it is not needful to live in towns to hear all the devilish devices that the conceit of man can invent to upset his own happiness. What does it prove, except indeed it may be said to prove that the garden he made was not after the miserable fashions of our times, thereby directly giving the lie to what the world calls its civilizing? No, no; the garden of the Lord was the forest then, and is the forest now, where the fruits do grow and the birds do sing, according to his own wise ordering. Now, lady, you may see the mystery of the vultures! There come the buffaloes themselves, and a noble herd it is! I warrant me that Pawnee has a troop of his people in some of the hollows nigh by; and, as he has gone scampering after them, you are about to see a glorious chase. It will serve to keep the squatter and his brood under cover, and for ourselves there is little reason to fear. A Pawnee is not apt to be a malicious savage."

Every one was now drawn to the striking spectacle that succeeded. Even the timid Inez hastened to the side of Middleton to gaze at the sight, and Paul summoned Ellen from her culinary labors to become a witness of the lively scene.

Throughout the whole of those moving events which it has been our duty to record, the prairies had lain in the majesty of perfect solitude. The heavens had been blackened with the passage of the migratory birds, it is true; but the dogs of the party and the ass of the doctor were the only quadrupeds that enlivened the broad surface of the waste beneath. There was now a sudden exhibition of animal life which changed the scene, as it were by magic, to the very opposite extreme.

A few enormous bison bulls were first observed scouring along the most distant roll of the prairie, and then succeeded long files of single beasts which, in their turns, were followed by a dark mass of bodies, until the dun-colored herbage of the plain was entirely lost in the deeper hue of their shaggy coats. The herd, as the col-

umn spread and thickened, was like the endless flocks of the smaller birds whose extended flanks are so often seen to heave up out of the abyss of the heavens, until they appear as countless as the leaves in those forests over which they wing their endless flight. Clouds of dust shot up in little columns from the center of the mass, as some animal, more furious than the rest, ploughed the plains with his horns and, from time to time, a deep hollow bellying was borne along on the wind, as if a thousand throats vented their plaints in a discordant murmuring.

A long and musing silence reigned in the party, as they gazed on this spectacle of wild and peculiar grandeur. It was at length broken by the trapper, who having been long accustomed to similar sights, felt less of its influence, or, rather felt it in a less thrilling and absorbing manner, than those to whom the scene was more novel.

"There go ten thousand oxen in one drove, without keeper or master, except him who made them and gave them these open plains for their pasture! Ay, it is here that man may see the proofs of his wantonness and folly! Can the proudest governor in all the States go into his fields and slaughter a nobler bullock than is here offered to the meanest hand; and when he has gotten his sirloin or his steak, can he eat it with as good a relish as he who has sweetened his food with wholesome toil, and earned it according to the law of *Natur*?" by honestly mastering that which the Lord hath put before him?"

"If the prairie platter is smoking with a buffalo's hump, I answer, No," interrupted the luxurious bee-hunter.

"Ay, boy, you have tasted, and you feel the genuine reasoning of the thing! But the herd is heading a little this-a-way, and it behooves us to make ready for their visit. If we hide ourselves altogether, the horned brutes will break through the place and trample us beneath their feet, like so many creeping worms; so we will just put the weak ones apart, and take post, as becomes men and hunters, in the van."

As there was but little time to make

the necessary arrangements, the whole party set about them in good earnest. Inez and Ellen were placed in the edge of the thicket on the side farthest from the approaching herd. Asinus was posted in the center, in consideration of his nerves; and then the old man, with his three male companions, divided themselves in such a manner as they thought would enable them to turn the head of the rushing column, should it chance to approach too nigh their position. By the vacillating movements of some fifty or a hundred bulls that led the advance, it remained questionable, for many moments, what course they intended to pursue. 'But a tremendous and painful roar, which came from behind the cloud of dust that rose in the center of the herd, and which was horridly answered by the screams of the carrion birds that were greedily sailing directly above the flying drove, appeared to give a new impulse to their flight, and at once to remove every symptom of indecision. As if glad to seek the smallest signs of the forest, the whole of the affrighted herd became steady in its direction, rushing in a straight line toward the little cover of bushes which has already been so often named.

The appearance of danger was now, in reality, of a character to try the stoutest nerves. The flanks of the dark, moving mass were advanced in such a manner as to make a concave line of the front, and every fierce eye, that was glaring from the shaggy wilderness of hair in which the entire heads of the males were enveloped, was riveted with mad anxiety on the thicket. It seemed as if each beast strove to outstrip his neighbor, in gaining this desired cover; and as thousands in the rear pressed blindly on those in front, there was the appearance of an imminent risk that the leaders of the herd would be precipitated on the concealed party, in which case the destruction of every one of them was certain. Each of our adventurers felt the danger of his situation in a manner peculiar to his individual character and circumstances.

Middleton wavered. At times he felt inclined to rush through the bushes, and,

seizing Inez, attempt to fly. Then recollecting the impossibility of outstripping the furious speed of an alarmed bison, he felt for his arms, determined to make head against the countless drove. The faculties of Dr. Battius were quickly wrought up to the very summit of mental delusion. The dark forms of the herd lost their distinctness, and then the naturalist began to fancy he beheld a wild collection of all the creatures of the world, rushing upon him in a body, as if to revenge the various injuries which, in the course of a life of indefatigable labor in behalf of the natural sciences, he had inflicted on their several genera. The paralysis it occasioned in his system was like the effect of the incubus. Equally unable to fly or to advance, he stood riveted to the spot, until the infatuation became so complete that the worthy naturalist was beginning, by a desperate effort of scientific resolution, even to class the different specimens. On the other hand, Paul shouted and called on Ellen to come and assist him in shouting, but his voice was lost in the bellowings and trampling of the herd. Furious, and yet strangely excited by the obstinacy of the brutes and the wildness of the sight, and nearly maddened by sympathy and a species of conscious apprehension, in which the claims of Nature were singularly mingled with concern for his mistress, he nearly split his throat in exhorting his aged friend to interfere.

"Come forth, old trapper," he shouted, "with your prairie inventions! or we shall be all smothered under a mountain of buffalo humps!"

The old man, who stood all this while leaning on his rifle, and regarding the movements of the herd with a steady eye, now deemed it time to strike his blow. Leveling his piece at the foremost bull, with an agility that would have done credit to his youth, he fired. The animal received the bullet on the matted hair between his horns, and fell to his knees; but shaking his head he instantly arose, the very shock seeming to increase his exertions. There was no longer time to hesitate. Throwing down his rifle the trapper stretched forth his arms and ad-

vanced from the cover with naked hands, directly toward the rushing column of the beast.

The figure of a man, when sustained by the firmness and steadiness that intellect can only impart, rarely fails of commanding respect from all the inferior animals of the creation. The leading bulls recoiled, and for a single instant there was a sudden stop to their speed, a dense mass of bodies rolling up in front, until hundreds were seen floundering and tumbling on the plain. Then came another of those hollow bellowings from the rear and set the herd again in motion. The head of the column, however, divided; the immovable form of the trapper cutting it, as it were, into two gliding streams of life. Middleton and Paul instantly profited by his example, and extended the feeble barrier by a similar exhibition of their own persons.

For a few moments the new impulse given to the animals in front served to protect the thicket. But, as the body of the herd pressed more and more upon the open line of its defenders, and the dusk thickened so as to obscure their persons, there was, at each instant, a renewed danger of the beasts breaking through. It became necessary for the trapper and his companions to become still more and more alert; and they were gradually yielding before the headlong multitude, when a furious bull darted by Middleton so near as to brush his person and, at the next instant, swept through the thicket with the velocity of the wind.

"Close, and die for the ground!" shouted the old man, "or a thousand of the devils will be at his heels!"

All their efforts would have proved fruitless, however, against the living torrent, had not Asinus, whose domains had just been so rudely entered, lifted his voice in the midst of the uproar. The most sturdy and furious of the bulls trembled at the alarming and unknown cry, and then each individual brute was seen madly pressing from that very thicket which the moment before he had endeavored to reach with the eagerness with which the murderer seeks the sanctuary.

As the stream divided the place became clear; the two dark columns moving obliquely from the copse, to unite again, at the distance of a mile, on its opposite side. The instant the old man saw the sudden effect which the voice of Asinus had produced, he coolly commenced re-loading his rifle, indulging at the same time in a heartfelt fit of his silent and peculiar merriment.

"There they go, like dogs with so many half-filled shot pouches dangling at their tails, and no fear of their breaking their order; for what the brutes in the rear didn't hear with their own ears, they'll conceit they did; besides, if they change their minds, it may be no hard matter to get the Jack to sing the rest of his tune!"

"The ass has spoken, but Balaam is silent!" cried the bee-hunter, catching his breath after a repeated burst of noisy mirth, that might possibly have added to the panic of the buffaloes by its vociferation. "The man is as completely dumfounded as if a swarm of young bees had settled on the end of his tongue, and he not willing to speak for fear of their answer."

"How now, friend," continued the trapper, addressing the still motionless and entranced naturalist; "how now, friend; are you who make your livelihood by booking the names and the natur's of the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air frightened at a herd of scampering buffaloes? Though, perhaps, you are ready to dispute my right to call them by a word that is in the mouth of every hunter and trader on the frontier!"

The old man was, however, mistaken in supposing he could excite the benumbed faculties of the doctor by provoking a discussion. From that time, henceforth, he was never known, except on one occasion, to utter a word that indicated either the species or the genus of the animal. He obstinately refused the nutritious food of the whole ox family; and even to the present hour, now that he is established in all the scientific dignity and security of a *savant* in one of the maritime towns, he turns his back with a shudder on those de-

licious and unrivaled viands that are so often seen at the suppers of the craft, and which are unequaled by anything that is served under the same name, at the boasted chop-houses of London, or at the most renowned of the Parisian *restaurants*. In short, the distaste of the worthy naturalist for beef was not unlike that which the shepherd sometimes produces, by first muzzling and fettering his delinquent dog, and then leaving him as a stepping-stone for the whole flock to use in its transit over a wall, or through the opening of a sheepfold; a process which is said to produce in the culprit a species of surfeit on the subject of mutton forever after. By the time Paul and the trapper saw fit to terminate the fresh bursts of merriment which the continued abstraction of their learned companion did not fail to excite, he commenced breathing again, as if the suspended action of his lungs had been renewed by the application of a pair of artificial bellows, and was heard to make use of the ever-afterward prescribed term, on that solitary occasion to which we have just alluded.

"*Boves Americani horridi!*" exclaimed the doctor, laying great stress on the latter word; after which he continued mute, like one who pondered on strange and unaccountable events.

"Ay, horrid eyes enough, I will willingly allow," returned the trapper; "and altogether the creatur' has a frightful look to one unused to the sights and bustle of a natural life; but then the courage of the beast is in no way equal to its countenance. Lord, man, if you should get fairly beset by a brood of grizzly bears, as happened to Hector and I, at the great falls of the Miss—. Ah, here comes the tail of the herd, and yonder goes a pack of hungry wolves, ready to pick up the sick or such as get a disjointed neck by a tumble. Ha! there are mounted men on their trail, or I'm no sinner!—Here, lad; you may see them here-away, just where the dust is scattering afore the wind. They are hovering around a wounded buffalo, making an end of the surly devil with their arrows!"

Middleton and Paul soon caught a

glimpse of the dark group that the quick eye of the old man so readily detected. Some fifteen or twenty horsemen were, in truth, to be seen riding in quick circuits about a noble bull which stood at bay, too grievously hurt to fly, and yet seeming to disdain to fall, notwithstanding his hardy body had already been the target for a hundred arrows. A thrust from the lance of a powerful Indian, however, completed his conquest, and the brute gave up his obstinate hold of life with a roar that passed bellowing over the place where our adventurers stood, and, reaching the ears of the affrighted herd, added a new impulse to their flight.

"How well the Pawnee knew the philosophy of a buffalo hunt!" said the old man, after he stood regarding the animated scene for a few moments with evident satisfaction. "You saw how he went off like the wind before the drove. It was in order that he might not taint the air, and that he might turn the flank and join—Ha! how is this? yonder red-skins are no Pawnees! The feathers in their heads are from the wings and tails of owls. Ah! as I am but a miserable half-sighted trapper, it is a band of the accursed Sioux! To cover, lads, to cover! A single cast of an eye this-a-way would strip us of every rag of clothes as surely as the lightning scorches the bush, and it might be that our very lives would be far from safe."

Middleton had already turned away from the spectacle to seek that which pleased him better—the sight of his young and beautiful bride. Paul seized the doctor by the arm; and, as the trapper followed with the smallest possible delay, the whole party was quickly collected within the cover of the thicket. After a few short explanations concerning the character of this new danger, the old man, on whom the whole duty of directing their movements was devolved in deference to his great experience, continued his discourse as follows:

"This is a region, as you must all know, where a strong arm is far better than the right, and where the white law is as little known as needed. Therefore does every-

thing now depend on judgment and power. If," he continued, laying his finger on his cheek like one who considered deeply all sides of the embarrassing situation in which he found himself—"if an invention could be framed which would set these Sioux and the brood of the squatter by the ears, then might we come in, like the buzzards after a fight atween the beasts, and pick up the gleanings off the ground—there are Pawnees nigh us, too! It is a certain matter, for yonder lad is not so far from his village without an errand. Here are therefore four parties within sound of a cannon, not one of whom can trust the other. All which makes movement a little difficult in a district where covers are far from plenty. But we are three well-armed, and I think I may say three stout-hearted men——"

"Four," interrupted Paul.

"Anan," said the old man, looking up simply at his companion.

"Four," repeated the bee-hunter, pointing to the naturalist.

"Every army has its hangers-on and idlers," rejoined the blunt border-man.—

"Friend, it will be necessary to slaughter this ass."

"To slay *Asinus*! Such a deed would be an act of supererogatory cruelty."

"I know nothing of your words, which hide their meaning in sound; but that is cruel which sacrifices a Christian to a brute. This is what I call the reason of mercy. It would be just as safe to blow a trumpet as to let the animal raise his voice again, inasmuch as it would prove a manifest challenge to the Sioux."

"I will answer for the discretion of *Asinus*, who seldom speaks without reason."

"They say a man can be known by the company he keeps," retorted the old man, "and why not a brute? I once made a forced march and went through a great deal of jeopardy with a companion who never opened his mouth but to sing; and trouble enough and great concern of mind did the fellow give me. It was in that very business with your grand'ther, captain. But then he had a human throat, and well did he know how to use it, on oc-

casion, though he didn't always stop to regard the time and season fit for such outreries. Ah's me! if I was now as I was then, it wouldn't be a band of thieving Sioux that should easily drive me from such a lodgment as this! But what signifies boasting when sight and strength are both failing? The warrior that the Delawares once saw fit to call after the hawk for the goodness of his eyes, would now be better termed the mole! In my judgment, therefore, it will be well to slay the brute."

"There's argument and good logic in it," said Paul; "music is music, and it's always noisy, whether it comes from a fiddle or a jackass. Therefore I agree with the old man, and say, kill the beast."

"Friends," said the naturalist, looking with a sorrowful eye from one to the other of his bloodily disposed companions, "slay not Asinus; he is a specimen of his kind of whom much good and little evil can be said. Hardy and docile for his *genus*; abstemious and patient even for his humble *species*. We have journeyed much together, and his death would grieve me. How would it trouble thy spirit, venerable venator, to separate in such an untimely manner from your faithful hound?"

"The animal shall not die," said the old man, suddenly clearing his throat in a manner that proved he felt the force of the appeal; "but his voice must be smothered. Bind his jaws with the halter, and then I think we must trust the rest to Providence."

With this double security for the discretion of Asinus, for Paul instantly bound the muzzle of the ass in the manner required, the trapper seemed content. After which he proceeded to the margin of the thicket to reconnoiter.

The uproar which attended the passage of the herd was now gone, or rather it was heard rolling along the prairie at the distance of a mile. The clouds of dust were already blown away by the wind, and a clear range was left to the eye in that place where ten minutes before there existed a scene of so much wildness and confusion.

The Sioux had completed their conquest,

and apparently satisfied with this addition to the numerous previous captures they had made, they now seemed content to let the remainder of the herd escape. A dozen remained around the carcass, over which a few buzzards were balancing themselves with steady wings and greedy eyes, while the rest were riding about in quest of such further booty as might come in their way on the trail of so vast a drove. The trapper measured the proportions and scanned the equipments of such individuals as drew nearer to the side of the thicket with careful eyes. At length he pointed out one among them to Middleton as Weucha.

"Now know we not only what they are, but their errand," the old man continued, deliberately shaking his head. "They have lost the trail of the squatter, and are on its hunt. These buffaloes have crossed their path, and in chasing the animals' bad luck has led them in open sight of the hill on which the brood of Ishmael have harbored. Do you see yon birds watching for the offals of the beast they have killed? Therein is a moral which teaches the manner of a prairie-life. A band of Pawnees are outlying for these very Sioux, as you see the buzzards looking down for their food; and it behooves us, as Christian men who have so much at stake, to look down upon them both. Ha! what brings yonder two skirting reptiles to a stand? As you live, they have found the place where the miserable son of the squatter met his death!"

The old man was not mistaken. Weucha, and a savage who accompanied him, had reached that spot which has already been mentioned as furnishing the frightful evidences of violence and bloodshed. There they sat on their horses, examining the well-known signs with the intelligence that distinguishes the habits of Indians. Their scrutiny was long, and apparently not without distrust. At length they raised a cry that was scarcely less piteous and startling than that which the hounds had before made over the same fatal signs, and which did not fail to draw the whole band immediately around them, as the fell bark of the jackal is said to gather his comrades to the chase.

CHAPTER XX.

"Welcome, ancient Pistol."—SHAKESPEARE.

It was not long before the trapper pointed out the commanding person of Mahtoree as the leader of the Sioux. This chief, who had been among the last to obey the vociferous summons of Weucha, no sooner reached the spot where his whole party was now gathered, than he threw himself from his horse, and proceeded to examine the marks of the extraordinary trail with that degree of dignity and attention which became his high and responsible station. The warriors, for it was but too evident that they were to a man of that fearless and ruthless class, awaited the result of his investigation with patient reserve; none but a few of the principal braves presuming even to speak while their leader was thus gravely occupied. It was several minutes before Mahtoree seemed satisfied. He then directed his eyes along the ground to those several places where Ishmael had found the same revolting evidences of the passage of some bloody struggle, and motioned to his people to follow.

The whole band advanced in a body toward the thicket, until they came to a halt within a few yards of the precise spot where Esther had stimulated her sluggish sons to break into the cover. The reader will readily imagine that the trapper and his companions were not indifferent observers of so threatening a movement. The old man summoned all who were capable of bearing arms to his side, and demanded in very unequivocal terms, though in a voice that was suitably lowered in order to escape the ears of their dangerous neighbors, whether they were disposed to make battle for their liberty, or whether they should try the milder expedient of conciliation. As it was a subject in which all had an equal interest, he put the question as to a council of war, and not without some slight exhibition of the lingering vestiges of a nearly extinct military pride. Paul and the doctor were diametrically opposed to each other in opinion; the former declaring for an immediate appeal to arms, and the latter was warmly espous-

ing the policy of pacific measures. Middleton, who saw that there was great danger of a hot verbal dispute between two men who were governed by feelings so diametrically opposed, saw fit to assume the office of arbiter; or rather to decide the question, his situation making him a sort of umpire. He also leaned to the side of peace, for he evidently saw that, in consequence of the vast superiority of their enemies, violence would irretrievably lead to their destruction.

The trapper listened to the reasons of the young soldier with great attention; and, as they were given with the steadiness of one who did not suffer apprehension to blind his judgment, they did not fail to produce a suitable impression.

"It is rational," rejoined the trapper, when the other had delivered his reasons: "it is very rational, for what man cannot move with his strength, he must circumvent with his wits. It is reason that makes him stronger than the buffalo and swifter than the moose. Now, stay you here and keep yourselves close. My life and my traps are but of little value when the welfare of so many human souls is concerned; and, moreover, I may say that I know the windings of Indian cunning. Therefore will I go alone upon the prairie. It may so happen that I can yet draw the eyes of the Sioux from this spot, and give you time and room to fly."

As if resolved to listen to no remonstrance, the old man quietly shouldered his rifle, and, moving leisurely through the thicket, he issued on the plain at a point whence he might first appear before the eyes of the Sioux without exciting their suspicions that he came from its cover.

The instant that the figure of a man dressed in the garb of a hunter, and bearing the well-known and much-dreaded rifle appeared before the eyes of the Sioux, there was a sensible though a suppressed sensation in the band. The artifice of the trapper had so far succeeded as to render it extremely doubtful whether he came from some point on the open prairie or from the thicket; though the Indians still continued to cast frequent and suspicious

glances at the cover. They had made their halt at the distance of an arrow-flight from the bushes; but when the stranger came sufficiently nigh to show that the deep coating of red and brown which time and exposure had given to his features was laid upon the original color of a pale-face, they slowly receded from the spot until they reached a distance that might defeat the aim of fire-arms.

In the meantime the old man continued to advance, until he had got nigh enough to make himself heard without difficulty. Here he stopped, and, dropping his rifle to the earth, he raised his hand with the palm outward, in token of peace. After uttering a few words of reproach to his hound, who watched the savage group with eyes that seemed to recognize them, he spoke in the Sioux tongue:

"My brothers are welcome," he said, cunningly constituting himself the master of the region in which they had met, and assuming the offices of hospitality. "They are far from their villages, and are hungry. Will they follow to my lodge, to eat and sleep?"

No sooner was his voice heard, than the yell of pleasure which burst from a dozen mouths convinced the sagacious trapper that he also was recognized. Feeling that it was too late to retreat he profited by the confusion which prevailed among them, while Weucha was explaining his character, to advance, until he was again face to face with the redoubtable Mahtoree. The second interview between these two men, each of whom was extraordinary in his way, was marked by the usual caution of the frontiers. They stood for nearly a minute, examining each other without speaking.

"Where are your young men?" sternly demanded the Teton chieftain, after he found that the immovable features of the trapper refused to betray any of their master's secrets, under his intimidating look.

"The Long-knives do not come in bands to trap the beaver! I am alone."

"Your head is white, but you have a forked tongue. Mahtoree has been in your camp. He knows that you are not

alone. Where is your young wife, and the warrior that I found upon the prairie?"

"I have no wife. I have told my brother that the woman and her friends were strangers. The words of a gray head should be heard, and not forgotten. The Dahcotahs found travelers asleep, and they thought they had no need of horses. The women and children of a pale-face are not used to go far on foot. Let them be sought where you left them."

The eyes of the Teton flashed fire as he answered:

"They are gone; but Mahtoree is a wise chief, and his eyes can see a great distance!"

"Does the partisan of the Tetons see men on these naked fields?" retorted the trapper, with great steadiness of mien. "I am very old, and my eyes grow dim. Where do they stand?"

The chief remained silent a moment, as if he disdained to contest any further the truth of a fact concerning which he was already satisfied. Then, pointing to the traces on the earth, he said, with a sudden transition to mildness in his eye and manner:

"My father has learned wisdom in many winters; can he tell me whose moccasin has left this trail?"

"There have been wolves and buffaloes on the prairies, and there may have been cougars, too."

Mahtoree glanced his eye at the thicket, as if he thought the latter suggestion not impossible. Pointing to the place he ordered his young men to reconnoiter it more closely, cautioning them at the same time, with a stern look at the trapper, to beware of treachery from the Big-knives. Three or four half-naked, eager-looking youths lashed their horses at the word, and darted away to obey the mandate. The old man trembled a little for the discretion of Paul when he saw this demonstration. The Tetons encircled the place two or three times, approaching nigher and nigher at each circuit, and then galloped back to their leader to report that the copse seemed empty. Notwithstanding the trapper watched the eye of Mahtoree to detect

the inward movements of his mind, and if possible to anticipate, in order to direct his suspicions, the utmost sagacity of one so long accustomed to study the cold habits of the Indian race could, however, detect no symptom nor expression that denoted how far he credited or distrusted this intelligence. Instead of replying to the information of his scouts he spoke kindly to his horse, and motioning to a youth to receive the bridle, or rather halter, by which he governed the animal, he took the trapper by the arm, and led him a little apart from the rest of the band.

"Has my brother been a warrior?" said the wily Teton, in a tone that he intended should be conciliating.

"Do the leaves cover the trees in the season of fruits? Go. The Dahcotahs have not seen as many warriors living as I have looked on in their blood! But what signifies idle remembrancing," he added, in English, "when limbs grow stiff and sight is failing?"

The chief regarded him a moment with a severe look, as if he would lay bare the falsehood he had heard; but, meeting in the calm eye and steady mien of the trapper a confirmation of the truth of what he said, he took the hand of the old man, and laid it gently on his head in token of the respect that was due to the other's years and experience.

"Why, then, do the Big-knives tell their red brethren to bury the tomahawk," he said, "when their own young men never forget that they are braves, and meet each other so often with bloody hands?"

"My nation is more numerous than the buffaloes on the prairies, or the pigeons in the air. Their quarrels are frequent; yet their warriors are few. None go out on the war-path but they who are gifted with the qualities of a brave, and therefore such see many battles."

"It is not so—my father is mistaken," returned Mahtoree, indulging in a smile of exulting penetration at the very instant he corrected the force of his denial in deference to the years and services of one so aged. "The Big-knives are very wise, and they are men; all of them would be

warriors. They would leave the red-skins to dig roots and hoe the corn. But a Dahcotah is not born to live like a woman; he must strike the Pawnee and the Omahaw, or he will lose the name of his fathers."

"The Master of Life looks with an open eye on his children who die in a battle that is fought for the right; but he is blind and his ears are shut to the cries of an Indian who is killed when plundering or doing evil to his neighbor."

"My father is old," said Mahtoree, looking at his aged companion with an expression of irony that sufficiently denoted he was one of those who overstep the trammels of education, and who are perhaps a little given to abuse the mental liberty they thus obtain. "He is *very* old; has he made a journey to the far country, and has he been at the trouble to come back to tell the young men what he has seen?"

"Teton," returned the trapper, throwing the breech of his rifle to the earth with startling vehemence, and regarding his companion with steady serenity, "I have heard that there are men among my people who study their great medicines until they believe themselves to be gods, and who laugh at all faith except in their own vanities. It may be true. It *is* true; for I have seen them. When man is shut up in towns and schools with his own follies, it may be easy to believe himself greater than the Master of Life; but a warrior who lives in a house with the clouds for its roof, where he can at any moment look both at the heavens and at the earth, and who daily sees the power of the Great Spirit, should be more humble. A Dahcotah chieftain ought to be too wise to laugh at justice."

The crafty Mahtoree, who saw that his free-thinking was not likely to produce a favorable impression on the old man, instantly changed his ground, by alluding to the more immediate subject of their interview. Laying his hand gently on the shoulder of the trapper, he led him forward until they both stood within fifty feet of the margin of the thicket. Here he fastened his penetrating eyes on the other's honest countenance, and continued the discourse—

"If my father has hid his young men in the bush, let him tell them to come forth. You see that a Dahcotah is not afraid. Mahtoree is a great chief! A warrior whose head is white, and who is about to go to the Land of Spirits, cannot have a tongue with two ends, like a serpent."

"Dahcotah, I have told no lie. Since the Great Spirit made me a man I have lived in the wilderness, or on these naked plains, without lodge or family. I am a hunter, and go on my path alone."

"My father has a good carabine. Let him point it in the bush and fire."

The old man hesitated a moment, and then slowly prepared himself to give this delicate assurance of the truth of what he said, without which he plainly perceived the suspicions of his crafty companion could not be lulled. As he lowered his rifle, his eye, although greatly dimmed and weakened by age, ran over the confused collection of objects that lay embedded amid the party-colored foliage of the thicket, until it succeeded in catching a glimpse of the brown covering of the stem of a small tree. With this object in view, he raised the piece to a level and fired. The bullet had no sooner glided from the barrel than a tremor seized the hands of the trapper, which, had it occurred a moment sooner, would have utterly disqualified him for so hazardous an experiment. A frightful silence succeeded the report, during which he expected to hear the shrieks of the females; and then, as the smoke whirled away in the wind, he caught a view of the fluttering bark, and felt assured that all his former skill was not entirely departed from him. Dropping the piece to the earth, he turned again to his companion with an air of the utmost composure, and demanded—

"Is my brother satisfied?"

"Mahtoree is a chief of the Dahcotahs," returned the cunning Teton, laying his hand on his chest, in acknowledgment of the other's sincerity. "He knows that a warrior, who has smoked at so many council-fires, until his head has grown white, would not be found in wicked com-

pany. But did not my father once ride on a horse, like a rich chief of the pale-faces, instead of traveling on foot like a hungry Konza?"

"Never! The Wahcondah has given me legs, and he has given me resolution to use them. For sixty summers and winters did I journey in the woods of America, and ten tiresome years have I dwelt on these open fields, without finding need to call often upon the gifts of the other creatur's of the Lord to carry me from place to place."

"If my father has so long lived in the shade, why has he come upon the prairies? The sun will scorch him."

The old man looked sorrowfully about for a moment, and then, turning with a confidential air to the other, he replied:

"I passed the spring, summer, and autumn of life among the trees. The winter of my days had come, and found me where I loved to be, in the quiet—ay, and in the honesty of the woods! Teton, then I slept happily, where my eyes could look up through the branches of the pines and the beeches, to the very dwelling of the Good Spirit of my people. If I had need to open my heart to him, while his fires were burning above my head, the door was open and before my eyes. But the axes of the choppers awoke me. For a long time my ears heard nothing but the uproar of clearings. I bore it like a warrior and a man; there was reason that I should bear it; but when that reason was ended, I bethought me to get beyond the accursed sounds. It was trying to the courage and to the habits, but I had heard of these vast and naked fields, and I come hither to escape the wasteful temper of my people. Tell me, Dahcotah, have I not done well?"

The trapper laid his long, lean finger on the naked shoulder of the Indian as he ended, and seemed to demand his felicitations on his ingenuity and success with a ghastly smile, in which triumph was singularly blended with regret. His companion listened intently and replied to the question by saying, in the sententious manner of his race—

"The head of my father is very gray;

he has always lived with men and he has seen everything. What he does is good ; what he speaks is wise. Now let him say is he sure that he is a stranger to the Big-knives, who are looking for their beasts on every side of the prairies and cannot find them ? ”

“ Dahcotah, what I have said is true. I live alone, and never do I mingle with men whose skins are white, if——”

His mouth was suddenly closed by an interruption that was as mortifying as it was unexpected. The words were still on his tongue when the bushes on the side of the thicket where they stood opened, and the whole of the party whom he had just left, and in whose behalf he was endeavoring to reconcile his love of truth to the necessity of prevaricating, came openly into view. A pause of mute astonishment succeeded this unlooked-for spectacle. Then Mahtoree, who did not suffer a muscle or a joint to betray the wonder and surprise he actually experienced, motioned toward the advancing friends of the trapper with an air of assumed civility and a smile that lighted his fierce, dark visage, as the glare of the setting sun reveals the volume and load of the cloud that is charged to bursting with the electric fluid. He, however, disdained to speak, or to give any other evidence of his intentions than by calling to his side the distant band, who sprang forward at his beck with the alacrity of willing subordinates.

In the meantime the friends of the old man continued to advance. Middleton himself was foremost, supporting the light and ærial-looking figure of Inez, on whose anxious countenance he cast such occasional glances of tender interest as, in similar circumstances, a father would have given to his child. Paul led Ellen, close in their rear. But, while the eye of the bee-hunter did not neglect his blooming companion, it scowled angrily, resembling more the aspect of the sullen and retreating bear than the soft intelligence of a favored suitor. Obed and Asinus came last, the former leading his companion with a degree of fondness that could hardly be said to be exceeded by any other of the party. The approach of the nat-

uralist was far less rapid than that of those who preceded him. His feet seemed equally reluctant to advance or to remain stationary ; his position bearing a great analogy to that of Mohammed's coffin, with the exception that the quality of repulsion rather than that of attraction held him in a state of rest. The repulsive power in his rear, however, appeared to predominate ; and, by a singular exception, as he would have said himself, to all philosophical principles, it rather increased than diminished by distance. As the eyes of the naturalist steadily maintained a position that was the opposite of his route, they served to give a direction to those of the observers of all these movements, and at once furnished a sufficient clew by which to unravel the mystery of so sudden a *débouchement* from the cover.

Another cluster of stout and armed men was seen at no great distance, just rounding a point of the thicket, and moving directly though cautiously toward the place where the band of the Sioux was posted, as a squadron of cruisers is often seen to steer across the waste of waters toward the rich but well-protected convoy. In short, the family of the squatter, or at least such among them as were capable of bearing arms, appeared in view on the broad prairie, evidently bent on revenging their wrongs.

Mahtoree and his party slowly retired from the thicket, the moment they caught a view of the strangers, until they halted on a swell that commanded a wide and unobstructed view of the naked fields on which they stood. Here the Dahcotah appeared disposed to make a stand, and to bring matters to an issue. Notwithstanding this retreat, in which he compelled the trapper to accompany him, Middleton still advanced until he too halted on the same elevation, and within speaking distance of the warlike Sioux. The borderers in their turn took a favorable position, though at a much greater distance. The three groups now resembled so many fleets at sea, lying with their topsails to the masts, with the commendable precaution of reconnoitering, before each could ascertain who among the

strangers might be considered as friends, and who as foes. During this moment of suspense, the dark, threatening eye of Mahtoree rolled from one of the strange parties to the other, in keen and hasty examination, and then it turned its withering look on the old man, as the chief said, in a tone of high and bitter scorn :

"The Big-knives are fools ! It is easier to catch the cougar asleep than to find a blind Dahcotah. Did the white-head think to ride on the horse of a Sioux ? "

The trapper, who had found time to collect his perplexed faculties, saw at once that Middleton, having perceived Ishmael on the trail by which they had fled, preferred trusting to the hospitality of the savages than to the treatment he would be likely to receive from the hands of the squatter. He therefore disposed himself to clear the way for the favorable reception of his friends, since he found that the unnatural coalition became necessary to secure the liberty, if not the lives, of his party.

"Did my brother ever go on a war-path to strike my people ? " he calmly demanded of the indignant chief, who still awaited his reply.

The lowering aspect of the Teton warrior so far lost its severity as to suffer a gleam of pleasure and triumph to lighten its ferocity, as, sweeping his arm in an entire circle around his person, he answered—

"What tribe or nation has not felt the blows of the Dahcotahs ? Mahtoree is their partisan."

"And has he found the Big-knives women, or has he found them men ? "

A multitude of fierce passions were struggling in the tawny countenance of the Indian. For a moment inextinguishable hatred seemed to hold the mastery, and then a nobler expression, and one that better became the character of a brave, got possession of his features, and maintained itself until, first throwing aside his light robe of pictured deerskin, and pointing to the scar of a bayonet in his breast, he replied—

"It was given, as it was taken, face to face."

"It is enough. My brother is a brave chief, and he should be wise. Let him look : is that a warrior of the pale-faces ? Was it one such as that who gave the great Dahcotah his hurt ? "

The eyes of Mahtoree followed the direction of the old man's extended arm, until they rested on the drooping form of Inez. The look of the Teton was long-riveted and admiring. Like that of the young Pawnee, it resembled more the gaze of a mortal on some heavenly image, than the admiration with which man is wont to contemplate even the loveliness of women. Starting, as if suddenly self-convicted of forgetfulness; the chief next turned his eyes on Ellen, where they lingered an instant with a much more intelligible expression of admiration, and then pursued their course until they had taken another glance at each individual of the party.

"My brother sees that my tongue is not forked," continued the trapper, watching the emotions the other betrayed with a readiness of comprehension little inferior to that of the Teton himself. "The Big-knives do not send their women to war. I know that the Dahcotahs will smoke with the strangers."

"Mahtoree is a great chief ! The Big-knives are welcome," said the Teton, laying his hand on his breast with an air of lofty politeness that would have done credit to any state of society. "The arrows of my young men are in their quivers."

The trapper motioned to Middleton to approach, and in a few moments the two parties were blended in one, each of the males having exchanged friendly greetings, after the fashions of the prairie warriors. But, even while engaged in this hospitable manner, the Dahcotah did not fail to keep a strict watch on the more distant party of white men, as if he still distrusted an artifice, or sought further explanation. The old man, in his turn, perceived the necessity of being more explicit, and of securing the slight and equivocal advantage he had already obtained. While affecting to examine the group which still lingered at the spot where it

had first halted, as if to discover the characters of those who composed it, he plainly saw that Ishmael contemplated immediate hostilities. The result of a conflict on the open prairie between a dozen resolute bordermen and the half-armed natives, even though seconded by their white allies, was, in his experienced judgment, a point of great uncertainty; and, though far from reluctant to engage in the struggle on account of himself, the aged trapper thought it far more worthy of his years and his character to avoid than to court the contest. His feelings were, for obvious reasons, in accordance with those of Paul and Middleton, who had lives still more precious than their own to watch over and protect. In this dilemma the three consulted on the means of escaping the frightful consequences which might immediately follow a single act of hostility on the part of the borderers; the old man taking care that their communication should, in the eyes of those who noted the expression of their countenances with jealous watchfulness, bear the appearance of explanations as to the reason why such a party of travelers was met so far in the deserts.

"I know that the Dahcotahs are a wise and great people," at length the trapper commenced, again addressing himself to the chief; "but does not their partisan know a single brother who is base?"

The eye of Mahtoree wandered proudly around his band, but rested a moment reluctantly on Weucha, as he answered, "The Master of life has made chiefs, and warriors, and women;" conceiving that he thus embraced all the gradations of human excellence, from the highest to the lowest.

"And he has also made pale-faces who are wicked. Such are they who my brother sees yonder."

"Do they go on foot to do wrong?" demanded the Teton, with a wild gleam from his eye that sufficiently betrayed how well he knew the reason why they were reduced to so humble an expedient.

"Their beasts are gone; but their powder, and their lead, and their blankets, remain."

"Do they carry their riches in their

hands, like miserable Konzas? or are they brave and leave them with the women, as men should do, who know where to find what they lose?"

"My brother sees the spot of blue across the prairie; look, the sun has touched it for the last time to-day."

"Mahtoree is not a mole."

"It is a rock; on it are the goods of the Big-knives."

An expression of savage joy shot into the dark countenance of the Teton as he listened; turning to the old man he seemed to read his soul, as if to assure himself he was not deceived. Then he bent his look on the party of Ishmael, and counted its number.

"One warrior is wanting," he said.

"Does my brother see the buzzards? there is his grave. Did he find blood on the prairie? it was his."

"Enough! Mahtoree is a wise chief. Put your women on the horses of the Dahcotahs; we shall see, for our eyes are open very wide."

The trapper wasted no unnecessary words in explanation. Familiar with the brevity and promptitude of the natives, he immediately communicated the result to his companions. Paul was mounted in an instant, with Ellen at his back. A few more moments were necessary to assure Middleton of the security and ease of Inez. While he was thus engaged, Mahtoree advanced to the side of the beast he had allotted to this service, which was his own, and manifested an intention to occupy his customary place on its back. The young soldier seized the reins of the animal, and glances of sudden anger and lofty pride were exchanged between them.

"No man takes this seat but myself," said Middleton, sternly, in English.

"Mahtoree is a great chief!" retorted the savage; neither comprehending the meaning of the other's words.

"The Dahcotah will be too late," whispered the old man at his elbow; "see! the Big-knives are afraid, and they will soon run."

The Teton chief instantly abandoned his claim, and threw himself on another horse, directing one of his young men to furnish

a similar accommodation for the trapper. The warriors who were dismounted got up behind as many of their companions. Dr. Battius bestrode Asinus, and notwithstanding the brief interruption, in half the time we have taken to relate it the whole party were prepared to move.

When he saw that all were ready, Mahtoree gave the signal to advance. A few of the best mounted of the warriors, the chief himself included, moved a little in front, and made a threatening demonstration, as if they intended to attack the strangers. The squatter, who was in truth slowly retiring, instantly halted his party and showed a willing front. Instead, however, of coming within reach of the dangerous aim of the Western rifle, the subtle savages kept wheeling about the strangers until they had made a half circuit, keeping the latter in constant expectation of an assault. Then, perfectly secure of their object, the Tetons raised a loud shout, and darted across the prairie in a line for the distant rock, with the directness, and nearly with the velocity of the arrow that has just been shot from its bow.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Dally not with the gods, but get thee gone."

—SHAKESPEARE.

MAHTOREE had scarcely given the first intimation of his real design before a general discharge from the borderers proved how well they understood it. The distance and the rapidity of the flight, however, rendered the fire harmless. As a proof how little he regarded the hostility of their party, the Dahcotah chieftain answered the report with a yell; and, flourishing his carabine above his head, he made a circuit of the plain, followed by his chosen warriors, in scorn of the impotent attempt of his enemies. As the main body continued the direct course, this little band of the *élite*, in returning from its wild exhibition of savage contempt, took its place in the rear with a dexterity and concert of action that showed the maneuver had been contemplated.

Volley swiftly succeeded volley until the enraged squatter was reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea of injuring his enemies by means so feeble. Relinquishing this fruitless attempt, he commenced a rapid pursuit, occasionally discharging a rifle in order to give the alarm to the garrison, which he had prudently left under the command of the redoubtable Esther herself. In this manner the chase was continued for many minutes, the horsemen gradually gaining on their pursuers, who maintained the race, however, with an incredible power of foot.

As the little speck of blue rose against the heavens, like an island issuing from the deep, the savages occasionally raised a yell of triumph. But the mists of evening were already gathering along the whole of the eastern margin of the prairie, and before the band had made half of the necessary distance, the dim outline of the rock had melted into the haze of the background. Indifferent to this circumstance, which rather favored than disconcerted his plans, Mahtoree, who had again ridden in front, held on his course with the accuracy of a hound of the truest scent, merely slackening his speed a little, as the horses of his party were by this time thoroughly blown. It was at this stage of the enterprise that the old man rode up to the side of Middleton and addressed him as follows in English:

"Here is likely to be a thieving business, and one in which I must say I have but little wish to be a partner."

"What would you do? It would be fatal to trust ourselves in the hands of the miscreants in our rear."

"Tut for miscreants, be they red or be they white! Look ahead, lad, as if ye were talking of our medicines, or perhaps praising the Teton beasts. For the knaves love to hear their horses commended, the same as a foolish mother in the settlements is fond of hearing the praises of her willful child. So—pat the animal and lay your hand on the gewgaws with which the red-skins have ornamented his mane, giving your eye, as it were, to one thing, and your mind to another. Listen: if matters are managed with judgment,

we may leave these Teton as the night sets in."

"A blessed thought!" exclaimed Middleton, who retained a painful remembrance of the look of admiration with which Mahtoree had contemplated the loveliness of Inez, as well as of his subsequent presumption in daring to wish to take the office of her protector on himself.

"Lord, Lord! what a weak creatur' is man, when the gifts of Natur' are smothered in bookish knowledge and womanly manners! Such another start would tell these imps at our elbows that we were plotting against them, just as plainly as if it were whispered in their ears by a Sioux tongue. Ay, ay, I know the devils; they look as innocent as so many frisky fawns, but there is not one among them all that has not an eye on our smallest motions. Therefore, what is to be done is to be done in wisdom, in order to circumvent their cunning. That is right; pat his neck and smile, as if you praised the horse, and keep the ear on my side open to my words. Be careful not to worry your beast, for, though but little skilled in horses, reason teaches that breath is needful in a hard push, and that a weary leg makes a dull race. Be ready to mind the signal, when you hear a whine from old Hector. The first will be to make ready; the second, to edge out of the crowd; and the third, to go—am I understood?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," said Middleton, trembling in his excessive eagerness to put the plan in instant execution, and pressing the little arm, which encircled his body, to his heart. "Perfectly. Hasten, hasten!"

"Ay, the beast is no sloth," continued the trapper in the Teton language, as if he continued the discourse, edging cautiously through the dusky throng at the same time, until he found himself riding at the side of Paul. He communicated his intentions in the same guarded manner as before. The high-spirited and fearless bee-hunter received the intelligence with delight, declaring his readiness to engage the whole of the savage band, should it become necessary to effect their object.

When the old man drew off from the side of this pair also, he cast his eyes about him to discover the situation occupied by the naturalist.

The doctor, with infinite labor to himself and Asinus, had maintained a position in the very center of the Sioux, so long as there existed the smallest reason for believing that any one of the missiles of Ishmael might arrive in contact with his person. After this danger had diminished, or rather disappeared entirely, his own courage revived, while that of his steed began to droop. To this mutual but very material change was owing the fact that the rider and the ass were now to be sought among that portion of the band who formed a sort of rear-guard. Hither, then, the trapper contrived to turn his steed, without exciting the suspicions of any of his subtle companions.

"Friend," commenced the old man, when he found himself in a situation favorable to discourse, "should you like to pass a dozen years among the savages with a shaved head, and a painted countenance, with, perhaps, a couple of wives and five or six children of the half-breed to call you father?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the startled naturalist. "I am indisposed to matrimony in general, and more especially to all admixture of the varieties of *species*, which only tend to tarnish the beauty and to interrupt the harmony of Nature. Moreover, it is a painful innovation on the order of all nomenclatures."

"Ay, ay, you have reason enough for your distaste to such a life; but should these Sioux get you fairly into their village, such would be your luck, as certain as that the sun rises and sets at the pleasure of the Lord."

"Marry me to a woman who is not adorned with the comeliness of the *species*!" responded the doctor. "Of what crime have I been guilty, that so grievous a punishment should await the offense? To marry a man against the movements of his will, is to do a violence to human nature."

"Now that you speak of natur', I have hopes that the gift of reason has not alto-

gether deserted your brain," returned the old man, with a covert expression playing about the angles of his deep-set eyes, which betrayed he was not entirely destitute of humor. "Nay, they may conceive you a remarkable subject for their kindness, and for that matter marry you to five or six. I have known in my days favored chiefs who had numberless wives."

"But why should they meditate this vengeance?" demanded the doctor, whose hair began to rise, as if each fiber was possessed of sensibility; "what evil have I done?"

"It is the fashion of their kindness. When they come to learn that you are a great medicine they will adopt you into the tribe, and some mighty chief will give you his name, and perhaps his daughter, or it may be a wife or two of his own, who have dwelt long in his lodge, and of whose value he is a judge by experience."

"The Governor and Founder of natural harmony protect me!" ejaculated the doctor. "I have no affinity to a single consort, much less to duplicates and triplicates of the *class*! I shall certainly essay a flight from their abodes before I mingle in so violent a conjunction."

"There is reason in your words; but why not attempt the race you speak of now?"

The naturalist looked fearfully around, as if he had an inclination to make an instant exhibition of his desperate intention; but the dusky figures who were riding on every side of him seemed suddenly tripled in number, and the darkness that was already thickening on the prairie appeared in his eyes to possess the glare of high noon.

"It would be premature, and reason forbids it," he answered. "Leave me, venerable venator, to the counsel of my own thoughts; and, when my plans are properly classed, I will advise you of my resolutions."

"Resolutions!" repeated the old man, shaking his head a little contemptuously, as he gave the rein to his horse, and allowed him to mingle with the steeds of the savages. "Resolution is a word that is talked of in the settlements, and felt on the

borders. Does my brother know the beast on which the pale-face rides?" he continued, addressing a gloomy-looking warrior in his own tongue, and making a motion with his arm that at the same time directed his attention to the naturalist and the meek Asinus.

The Teton turned his eyes for a minute on the animal, but disdained to manifest the smallest portion of that wonder he had felt in common with all his companions, on first viewing so rare a quadruped. The trapper was not ignorant that, while asses and mules were beginning to be known to those tribes who dwelt nearest the Mexicos, they were not usually encountered so far north as the waters of the La Platte. He therefore managed to read the mute astonishment that lay so deeply concealed in the tawny visage of the savage, and took his measures accordingly."

"Does my brother think that the rider is a warrior of the pale-faces?" he demanded, when he believed that sufficient time had elapsed for a full examination of the pacific mien of the naturalist.

The flash of scorn which shot across the features of the Teton was visible even by the dim light of the stars.

"Is a Dahcotah a fool?" was the answer.

"They are a wise nation, whose eyes are never shut; much do I wonder that they have not seen the great medicine of the Big-knives!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed his companion, suffering the whole of his amazement to burst out of his dark, rigid countenance at the surprise, like a flash of lightning illuminating the gloom of midnight.

"The Dahcotah knows that my tongue is not forked. Let him open his eyes wider. Does he not see a very great medicine?"

The light was not necessary to recall to the savage each feature in the really remarkable costume and equipage of Dr. Battius. In common with the rest of the band, and in conformity with the universal practice of the Indians, this warrior, while he had suffered no gaze of idle curiosity to disgrace his manhood, had not permitted a single distinctive mark which might

characterize any one of the strangers to escape his vigilance. He knew the air, the stature, the dress, and the features, even to the color of the eyes and of the hair, of every one of the Big-knives whom he had thus strangely encountered, and deeply had he ruminated on the causes which could have led a party so singularly constituted into the haunts of the rude inhabitants of his native wastes. He had already considered the several physical powers of the whole party, and had duly compared their abilities with what he supposed might have been their intentions. Warriors they were not, for the Big-knives, like the Sioux, left their women in their villages when they went out on the bloody path. The same objections applied to them as hunters, and even as traders, the two characters under which the white man commonly appeared in their villages. He had heard of a great council at which the Menahashah, or Long-knives, and the Washsheomantiqua, or Spaniards, had smoked together, when the latter had sold to the former their incomprehensible rights over those vast regions through which his nation had roamed in freedom for so many ages. His simple mind had not been able to embrace the reasons why one people should thus assume a superiority over the possessions of another; and it will readily be perceived that, at the hint just received from the trapper, he was not indisposed to fancy that some of the hidden subtlety of that magical influence of which he was so firm a believer, was about to be practiced by the unsuspecting subject of their conversation, in furtherance of these mysterious claims. Abandoning, therefore, all the reserve and dignity of his manner under the conscious helplessness of ignorance, he turned to the old man, and, stretching forth his arms, as if to denote how much he lay at his mercy, he said:

"Let my father look at me. I am a wild man of the prairies; my body is naked; my hands empty; my skin red. I have struck the Pawnees, the Konzas, the Omahaws, the Osages, and even the Long-knives. I am a man amid warriors, but a woman among the conjurors. Let

my father speak: the ears of the Teton are open. He listens like a deer to the step of the cougar.

"Such are the wise and uns'archable ways of One who alone knows good from evil!" exclaimed the trapper, in English; "to some he grants cunning, and on others he bestows the gift of manhood! It is humbling and it is afflicting to see so noble a creatur' as this, who has fou't in many a bloody fray, truckling before his superstition like a beggar asking for the bones you would throw to the dogs. The Lord will forgive me for playing with the ignorance of the savage, for he knows I do it in no mockery of his state, or in idle vaunting of my own; but in order to save mortal life and to give justice to the wronged, while I defeat the deviltries of the wicked!—Teton," speaking again in the language of the listener, "I ask you, is not that a wonderful medicine? If the Dahcotahs are wise, they will not breathe the air he breathes, nor touch his robes. They know the Waconshechah (bad spirit) loves his own children, and will not turn his back on him that does them harm."

The old man delivered this opinion in an ominous and sententious manner, and then rode apart as if he had said enough. The result justified his expectations. The warrior to whom he had addressed himself was not slow to communicate his important knowledge to the rest of the rear-guard, and in a very few moments the naturalist was the object of general observation and reverence. The trapper, who understood that the natives often worshiped, with a view to propitiate, the evil spirit, awaited the workings of his artifice with the coolness of one who had not the smallest interest in its effects. It was not long before he saw one dark figure after another lashing his horse and galloping ahead into the center of the band, until Weucha alone remained nigh the persons of himself and Obed. The very dullness of this groveling-minded savage, who continued gazing at the supposed conjurer with a sort of stupid admiration, opposed now the only obstacle to the complete success of his artifice.

Thoroughly understanding the character

of this Indian, the old man lost no time in getting rid of him also. Riding to his side he said, in an affected whisper—

"Has Weucha drunk of the milk of the Big-knives to-day?"

"Hugh!" exclaimed the savage, every dull thought instantly recalled from heaven to earth by the question.

"Because the great captain of my people, who rides in front, has a cow that is never empty. I know know it will not be long before he will say, 'Are any of my red brethren dry?'"

The words were scarcely uttered before Weucha, in his turn, quickened the gait of his beast, and was soon blended with the rest of the dark group, who were riding at a more moderate pace, a few rods in advance. The trapper, who knew how fickle and sudden were the changes of a savage mind, did not lose a moment in profiting by this advantage. He loosened the reins of his own impatient steed, and in an instant he was again at the side of Obed.

"Do you see the twinkling star, that is, maybe, the length of four rifles above the prairie—here-away to the north, I mean?"

"Ay, it is of the constellation——"

"A tut for your constellations, man! do you see the star I mean! Tell me in the English of the land, yes or no?"

"Yes."

"The minute my back is turned, pull upon the rein of your ass, until you lose sight of the savages. Then take the Lord for your dependence, and yonder star for your guide. Turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but make diligent use of your time, for your beast is not quick of foot, and every inch of prairie you gain is a day added to your liberty, or to your life."

Without waiting to listen to the queries which the naturalist was about to put, the old man again loosened the reins of his horse, and presently he too was blended with the group in front.

Obed was now alone. Asinus willingly obeyed the hint which his master soon gave, rather in desperation than with any very collected understanding of the orders he had received, and checked his pace ac-

cordingly. As the Tetons, however, rode at a hand-gallop, but a moment of time was necessary, after the ass began to walk, to remove them effectually from before the vision of his rider. Without plan, expectation, or hope of any sort, except that of escaping from his dangerous neighbors, the doctor, first feeling to assure himself that the package which contained the miserable remnants of his specimens and notes was safe at his crupper, turned the head of the beast in the required direction, and, kicking him with a species of fury, he soon succeeded in exciting the speed of the patient animal into a smart run. He had barely time to descend into a hollow and ascend the adjoining swell of the prairie before he heard, or fancied he heard, his name shouted in good English from the throats of twenty Tetons. The delusion gave a new impulse to his ardor, and no professor of the saltant art ever applied himself with greater industry than the naturalist now used his heels on the ribs of Asinus. The conflict endured for several minutes without interruption, and to all appearances it might have continued to the present moment had not the meek temper of the beast become unduly excited. Borrowing an idea from the manner in which his master exhibited his agitation, Asinus so far changed the application of his own heels as to raise them simultaneously with a certain indignant flourish into the air, a measure that instantly decided the controversy in his favor. Obed took leave of his seat as of a position no longer tenable, continuing, however, the direction of his flight; while the ass, like a conqueror, took possession of the field of battle, beginning to crop the dry herbage as the fruits of victory.

When Dr. Battius had recovered his feet and rallied his faculties, which were in a good deal of disorder from the hurried manner in which he had abandoned his former situation, he returned in quest of his specimens and of his ass. Asinus displayed enough of magnanimity to render the interview amicable, and thenceforth the naturalist continued the required route with very commendable industry, but with a much more tempered discretion.

In the meantime the old trapper had not lost sight of the important movements that he had undertaken to control. Obed had not been mistaken in supposing that he was already missed and sought, though his imagination had corrupted certain savage cries into the well-known sounds that composed his own Latinized name. The truth was simply this: The warriors of the rear-guard had not failed to apprise those in front of the mysterious character with which it had pleased the trapper to invest the unsuspecting naturalist. The same untutored admiration which on the receipt of this intelligence had driven those in the rear to the front, now drove many of the front to the rear. The doctor was of course absent, and the outcry was no more than the wild yells which were raised in the first burst of savage disappointment.

But the authority of Mahtoree was prompt to aid the ingenuity of the trapper in suppressing these dangerous sounds. When order was restored and the former was made acquainted with the reason why his young men had betrayed so strong a mark of indiscretion, the old man, who had taken a post at his elbow, saw with alarm the gleam of keen distrust that flashed in his swarthy visage.

"Where is your conjurer?" demanded the chief, turning suddenly to the trapper, as if he meant to make him responsible for the reappearance of Obed.

"Can I tell my brother the number of the stars? The ways of the great medicine are not like the ways of other men."

"Listen to me, gray-head, and count my words," continued the other, bending on his rude saddle-bow like some chevalier of a more civilized race, and speaking in the haughty tones of absolute power; "the Dahcotahs have not chosen a woman for their chief. When Mahtoree feels the power of a great medicine, he will tremble; until then he will look with his own eyes, without borrowing sight from a pale-face. If your conjurer is not with his friends in the morning, my young men shall look for him. Your ears are open. Enough."

The trapper was not sorry to find that

so long a respite was granted. He had before found reason to believe that the Teton partisan was one of those bold spirits who overstep the limits which use and education fix to the opinions of man in every state of society, and he now saw plainly that he must adopt some artifice to deceive him different from that which had succeeded so well with his followers. The sudden appearance of the rock, however, which hove up, a bleak and ragged mass out of the darkness ahead, put an end for the present to the discourse, Mahtoree giving all his thoughts to the execution of his designs on the rest of the squatter's movables. A murmur ran through the band as each dark warrior caught a glimpse of the desired haven, after which the nicest ear might have listened in vain to catch a sound louder than the rustling of feet among the tall grass of the prairie.

But the vigilance of Esther was not easily deceived. She had long listened anxiously to the suspicious sounds which approached the rock across the naked waste, nor had the sudden outcry been unheard by the unwearied sentinels of the rock. The savages, who had dismounted at some little distance, had not time to draw around the base of the hill in their customary silent and insidious manner, before the voice of the Amazon was raised, demanding:

"Who is beneath? Answer for your lives! Sioux or devils, I fear ye not."

No answer was given to this challenge, every warrior halting where he stood, confident that his dusky form was blended with the shadows of the plain. It was at this moment that the trapper determined to escape. He had been left with the rest of his friends under the surveillance of those who were assigned to the duty of watching the horses, and, as they all continued mounted, the moment appeared favorable for his project. The attention of the guards was drawn to the rock, and a heavy cloud, driving above them at that instant, obscured even the feeble light which fell from the stars. Leaning on the neck of his horse, the old man muttered:

"Where is my pup? Where is it—Hector—where is it, dog?"

The hound caught the well-known sounds, and answered by a whine of friendship, which threatened to break into one of his piercing howls. The trapper was in the act of raising himself from this successful exploit, when he felt the hand of Weucha grasping his throat, as if determined to suppress his voice by the very unequivocal process of strangulation. Profiting by the circumstance, he raised another low sound, as in the natural effort of breathing, which drew a second responsive cry from the faithful hound. Weucha instantly abandoned his hold of the master in order to wreak his vengeance on the dog. But the voice of Esther was again heard, and every other design was abandoned in order to listen.

"Ay, whine and deform your throats as you may, ye imps of darkness," she said, with a cracked but scornful laugh; "I know ye; tarry, and ye shall have light for your misdeeds. Put in the coal, Phoebe; put in the coal; your father and the boys shall see that they are wanted at home, to welcome their guests."

As she spoke, a strong light, that of a brilliant star, was seen on the very pinnacle of the rock; then followed a forked flame, which curled for a moment amid the windings of an enormous pile of brush, and flashing upward in a united sheet, it wavered to and fro in the passing air, shedding a bright glare on every object within its influence. A taunting laugh was heard from the height, in which the voices of all ages mingled, as though they triumphed at having so successfully exposed the treacherous intentions of the Tetons.

The trapper looked about him to ascertain in what situations he might find his friends. True to the signals, Middleton and Paul had drawn a little apart, and now stood ready, by every appearance, to commence their flight at the third repetition of the cry. Hector had escaped his savage pursuer, and was again crouching at the heels of his master's horse. But the broad circle of light was gradually increasing in extent and power, and the old man, whose eye and judgment so rarely failed

him, patiently awaited a more propitious moment for his enterprise.

"Now, Ishmael, my man, if sight and hand ar' true as ever, now is the time to work upon these red-skins, who claim to own all your property, even to your wife and children. Now, my good man, prove both breed and character!"

A distant shout was heard in the direction of the approaching party of the squatter, assuring the female garrison that succor was not far distant. Esther answered to the grateful sounds by a cracked cry of her own, lifting her form, in the first burst of exultation, above the rock in a manner to be visible to all below. Not content with this dangerous exposure of her person, she was in the act of tossing her arms in triumph, when the dark figure of Mahtoree shot into the light and pinioned them to her side. The forms of three other warriors glided across the top of the rock, looking like naked demons flitting among the clouds. The air was filled with the brands of the beacon, and a heavy darkness succeeded, not unlike that of the appalling instant when the last rays of the sun are excluded by the intervening mass of the moon. A yell of triumph burst from the savages in their turn, and was rather accompanied than followed by a loud, long whine from Hector.

In an instant the old man was between the horses of Middleton and Paul, extending a hand to the bridle of each, in order to check the impatience of their riders.

"Softly, softly," he whispered, "their eyes are as marvelously shut for the minute as if the Lord had stricken them blind; but their ears are open. Softly, softly; for fifty yards, at least, we must move no faster than a walk."

The five minutes of doubt that succeeded appeared like an age to all but the trapper. As their sight was gradually restored, it seemed to each that the momentary gloom which followed the extinction of the beacon was to be replaced by as broad a light as that of noonday. Gradually the old man, however, suffered the animals to quicken their steps, until they had gained the center of one of the prairie

bottoms. Then, laughing in his quiet manner, he released the reins, and said :

"Now let them give play to their legs; but keep on the old fog to deaden the sounds."

It is needless to say how cheerfully he was obeyed. In a few more minutes they ascended and crossed a swell of the land, after which the flight was continued at the top of their horses' speed, keeping the indicated star in view, as the laboring bark steers for the light which points the way to a haven and security.

CHAPTER XXII.

"The clouds and sunbeams o'er his eye,
That once their shade and glories threw,
Have left, in yonder silent sky,
No vestige where they flew."—MONTGOMERY.

A STILLNESS, as deep as that which marked the gloomy wastes in their front, was observed by the fugitives to distinguish the spot they had just abandoned. Even the trapper lent his practiced faculties, in vain, to detect any of the well-known signs which might establish the important fact that hostilities had actually commenced between the parties of Mahtoree and Ishmael; but their horses carried them out of the reach of sounds, without the occurrence of the smallest evidence of the sort. The old man, from time to time, muttered his discontent, but manifested the uneasiness he actually entertained in no other manner, unless it might be in exhibiting a growing anxiety to urge the animals to increase their speed. He pointed out, in passing, the deserted swale where the family of the squatter had encamped, the night they were introduced to the reader, and afterward he maintained an ominous silence—ominous because his companions had already seen enough of his character to be convinced that the circumstances must be critical indeed which possessed the power to disturb the well-regulated tranquillity of the old man's mind.

"Have we not done enough?" Middleton demanded, in tenderness to the inability of Inez and Ellen to endure too

much fatigue, at the end of some hours; "we have ridden hard, and have crossed a wide tract of plain. It is time to seek a place of rest."

"You must seek it, then, in heaven, if you find yourselves unequal to a longer march," murmured the old trapper. "Had the Tetons and the squatter come to blows, as any one might see in the natur' of things they were bound to do, there would be time to look about us, and to calculate not only the chances but the comforts of the journey; but, as the case actually is, I should consider it certain death, or endless captivity, to trust our eyes with sleep until our heads are fairly hid in some uncommon cover."

"I know not," returned the youth, who reflected more on the sufferings of the fragile being he supported than on the experience of his companion—"I know not; we have ridden leagues, and I can see no extraordinary signs of danger; if you fear for yourself, my good friend, believe me you are wrong, for—"

"Your gran'ther, were he living and here," interrupted the old man, stretching forth a hand and laying a finger impressively on the arm of Middleton, "would have spared those words. He had some reason to think that, in the prime of my day, when my eye was quicker than the hawk's, and my limbs were as active as the legs of the fallow deer, I never clung too eagerly and fondly to life; then why should I now feel such a childish affection for a thing that I know to be vain, and the companion of pain and sorrow? Let the Tetons do their worst; they will not find a miserable and worn-out trapper the loudest in his complaints or his prayers."

"Pardon me, my worthy, my inestimable friend," exclaimed the repentant young man, warmly grasping the hand which the other was in the act of withdrawing; "I knew not what I said—or rather I thought only of those whose tenderness we are most bound to consider."

"Enough. It's natur', and it is right. Therein your gran'ther would have done the very same. Ah's me! what a number of seasons, hot and cold, wet and dry, have rolled over my poor head since the

time we worried it out together, among the red Hurons of the lakes, back in those rugged mountains of Old York! and many a noble buck has since that day fallen by my hand; ay, and many a thieving Mingo, too! Tell me, lad, did the general, for general I know he got to be, did he ever tell you of the deer we took that night the outliers of the accursed tribe drove us to the caves on the island, and how we feasted and drunk in security?"

"I have often heard him mention the smallest circumstance of the night you mean; but——"

"And the singer, and his open throat, and his shoutings in the fights!" continued the old man, laughing joyously at the strength of his own recollections.

"All—all—he forgot nothing, even to the most trifling incident. Do you not——"

"What! did he tell you of the imp behind the log—and of the miserable devil who went over the fall—or of the wretch in the tree?"

"Of each and all, with everything that concerned them.* I should think——"

"Ay," continued the old man, in a voice which betrayed how powerfully his own faculties retained the impression of the spectacle, "I have been a dweller in forests and in the wilderness for threescore and ten years, and if any can pretend to know the world, or to have seen scary sights, it is myself! But never, before nor since, have I seen human man in such a state of mortal despair as that very savage; and yet he scorned to speak, or to cry out, or to own his forlorn condition! It is their gift, and nobly did he maintain it!"

"Harkee, old trapper," interrupted Paul, who, content with the knowledge that his waist was grasped by one of the arms of Ellen, had hitherto ridden in unusual silence; "my eyes are as true and as delicate as a humming-bird's in the day, but they are nothing worth boasting of by star-light. Is that a sick buffalo crawling along in the bottom there, or is it one of the stray cattle of the savages?"

*They who have read the preceding books, in which the trapper appears as a hunter and a scout, will readily understand the allusions.

The whole party drew up, in order to examine the object which Paul had pointed out. During most of the time they had ridden in the little vales in order to seek the protection of the shadows, but just at that moment they had ascended a roll of the prairie in order to cross into the very bottom where this unknown animal was now seen.

"Let us descend," said Middleton; "be it beast or man, we are too strong to have any cause of fear."

"Now, if the thing was not morally impossible," cried the trapper, who the reader must have already discovered was not always exact in the use of qualifying words, "if the thing was not morally impossible, I should say that was the man who journeys in search of reptiles and insects—our fellow-traveler, the doctor."

"Why impossible? did you not direct him to pursue this course, in order to rejoin us?"

"Ay, but I did not tell him to make an ass outdo the speed of a horse. You are right—you are right," said the trapper, interrupting himself, as, by gradually lessening the distance between them, his eyes assured him it was Obed and Asinus whom he saw—"you are right, as certainly as the thing is a miracle. Lord, what a thing is fear!—How now, friend; you have been industrious to have got so far ahead in so short a time. I marvel at the speed of the ass!"

"Asinus is overcome," returned the naturalist, mournfully. "The animal has certainly not been idle since we separated, but he declines all my admonitions and invitations to proceed. I hope there is no instant fear from the savages?"

"I cannot say that—I cannot say that; matters are not as they should be atween the squatter and the Tetons, nor will I answer as yet for the safety of any scalp among us. The beast is broken down; you have urged him beyond his natural gifts, and he is like a worried hound. There is pity and discretion in all things, even though a man be riding for his life."

"You indicated the star," returned the doctor, "and I deemed it expedient to use

great diligence in pursuing the direction."

"Did you expect to reach it by such haste! Go, go; you talk boldly of the creator's of the Lord, though I plainly see you are but a child in matters that concern their gifts and instincts. What a plight would you now be in, if there was need for a long and a quick push with our heels!"

"The fault exists in the formation of the quadruped," said Obed, whose placid temper began to revolt under so many scandalous imputations. "Had there been rotary levers for two of the members, a moiety of the fatigue would have been saved, for one item——"

"That, for your moiety's and rotaries and items, man; a jaded ass is a jaded ass, and he who denies it is but a brother of the beast itself. Now, captain, are we driven to choose one of two evils. We must either abandon this man, who has been too much with us through good and bad to be easily cast away, or we must seek a cover to let the animal rest."

"Venerable venator!" exclaimed the alarmed Obed, "I conjure you by all the secret sympathies of our common nature, by all the hidden——"

"Ah, fear has brought him to talk a little rational sense! It is not nature, truly, to abandon a brother in distress, and the Lord he knows that I have never yet done the shameful deed. You are right, friend, you are right; we must all be hidden, and that speedily. But what to do with the ass! Friend doctor, do you truly value the life of the creature?"

"He is an ancient and faithful servant," returned the disconsolate Obed, "and with pain should I see him come to any harm. Fetter his lower limbs and leave him to repose in this bed of herbage. I will engage he shall be found where he is left, in the morning."

"And the Sioux? What would become of the beast should any of the red imps catch a peep at his ears, growing up out of the grass like two mullein tops?" cried the bee-hunter. "They would stick him as full of arrows as a woman's cushion is full

of pins, and then believe they had done the job for the father of all rabbits! My word for it, but they would find out their blunder at the first mouthful!"

Middleton, who began to grow impatient under the protracted discussion, interposed, and, as a good deal of deference was paid to his rank, he quickly prevailed in his efforts to effect a sort of compromise. The humble Asinus, too meek and too weary to make any resistance, was soon tethered and deposited in his bed of dying grass, where he was left, with a perfect confidence on the part of his master of finding him again at the expiration of a few hours. The old man strongly remonstrated against this arrangement, and more than once hinted that the knife was much more certain than the tether; but the petitions of Obed, aided perhaps by the secret reluctance of the trapper to destroy the beast, were the means of saving its life. When Asinus was thus secured, and as his master believed secreted, the whole party proceeded to find some place where they might rest themselves, during the time required for the repose of the animal.

According to the calculations of the trapper, they had ridden twenty miles since the commencement of their flight. The delicate frame of Inez began to droop under the excessive fatigue, nor was the more robust but still feminine person of Ellen insensible to the extraordinary effort she had made. Middleton himself was not sorry to repose, nor did the vigorous and high-spirited Paul hesitate to confess that he should be all the better for a little rest. The old man alone seemed indifferent to the usual claims of Nature. Although but little accustomed to the unusual description of exercise he had just been taking, he appeared to bid defiance to all the usual attacks of human infirmities. Though evidently so near its dissolution, his attenuated frame stood like the shaft of seasoned oak, dry, naked, and tempest-riven, but unbending and apparently indurated to the consistency of stone. On the present occasion he conducted the search for a resting-place, which was immediately commenced, with all the energy of youth

tempered by the discretion and experience of his great age.

The bed of grass in which the doctor had been met, and in which his ass had just been left, was followed a little distance until it was found that the rolling swells of the prairie were melting away into one vast level plain, that was covered, for miles on miles, with the same species of herbage.

"Ah, this may do, this may do," said the old man, when they arrived on the borders of this sea of withered grass. "I know the spot, and often have I lain in its secret holes, for days at a time, while savages have been hunting the buffaloes on the open ground. We must enter it with great care, for a broad trail might be seen, and Indian curiosity is a dangerous neighbor."

Leading the way himself, he selected a spot where the tall, coarse herbage stood most erect, growing not unlike a bed of reeds, both in height and density. Here he entered, singly, directing the others to follow as nearly as possible in his own footsteps. When they had passed for some hundred or two feet into the wilderness of weeds, he gave his directions to Paul and Middleton, who continued a direct route deeper into the place, while he dismounted and returned on his tracks to the margin of the meadow. Here he passed many minutes in replacing the trodden grass, and in effacing, as far as possible, every evidence of their passage.

In the meantime the rest of the party continued their progress, not without toil, and consequently at a very moderate gait, until they had penetrated a mile into the place. Here they found a spot suited to their circumstances, and, dismounting, they began to make their dispositions to pass the remainder of the night. By this time the trapper had rejoined the party, and again resumed the direction of their proceedings.

The weeds and grass were soon plucked and cut from an area of sufficient extent, and a bed for Inez and Ellen was speedily made, a little apart, which for sweetness and ease might have rivaled one of down. The exhausted females, after receiving

some light refreshments from the provident stores of Paul and the old man, now sought their repose, leaving their more stout companions at liberty to provide for their own necessities. Middleton and Paul were not long in following the example of their betrothed, leaving the trapper and the naturalist still seated around a savory dish of bison's meat, which had been cooked at a previous halt, and which was, as usual, eaten cold.

A certain lingering sensation, which had so long been uppermost in the mind of Obed, temporarily banished sleep; and as for the old man, his wants were rendered, by habit and necessity, asseemingly subject to his will as if they altogether depended on the pleasure of the moment. Like his companion, he chose, therefore, to watch instead of sleeping.

"If the children of ease and security knew the hardships and dangers the students of nature encounter in their behalf," said Obed, after a moment of silence, when Middleton took his leave for the night, "pillars of silver and statues of brass would be reared as the everlasting monuments of their glory!"

"I know not—I know not," returned his companion; "silver is far from plenty, at least in the wilderness, and your brazen idols are forbidden in the commandments of the Lord."

"Such, indeed, was the spirit of the great law-giver of the Jews, but the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, the Greeks and the Romans, were wont to manifest their gratitude in these types of the human form. Indeed, many of the illustrious masters of antiquity have, by the aid of science and skill, even outdone the works of Nature, and exhibited a beauty and perfection in the human form that are difficult to be found in the rarest living specimens of any of the species; *genus homo*."

"Can your idols walk or speak, or have they the glorious gift of reason?" demanded the trapper with some indignation in his voice. "Though but little given to run into the noise and chatter of the settlements, yet have I been into the towns in my day to barter the peltry for lead and

powder, and often have I seen your waxen dolls with their tawdry clothes and glass eyes——”

“Waxen dolls!” interrupted Obed; “it is profanation in view of the arts to liken the miserable handiwork of the dealers in wax to the pure models of antiquity!”

“It is profanation in the eyes of the Lord,” retorted the old man, “to liken the works of his creatures to the power of his own hand.”

“Venerable venator,” resumed the naturalist, clearing his throat like one who was much in earnest, “let us discuss understandingly and in amity. You speak of the dross of ignorance, whereas my memory dwells on those precious jewels which it was my happy fortune formerly to witness among the treasured glories of the Old World.

“*Old World!*” retorted the trapper, “that is the miserable cry of all the half-starved miscreants that have come into this blessed land since the days of my boyhood. They tell you of the *Old World* as if the Lord had not the power and the will to create the universe in a day; or as if he had not bestowed his gifts with an equal hand, though not with an equal mind or equal wisdom have they been received and used. Were they to say a *worn-out*, and an *abused*, and a *sacrilegious* world, they might not be so far from the truth!”

Dr. Battius, who found it quite as arduous a task to maintain any of his favorite positions with so irregular an antagonist as he would have found it difficult to keep his feet within the hug of a Western wrestler, hemmed aloud, and profited by the new opening the trapper had made to shift the grounds of the discussion:

“By Old and New World, my excellent associate,” he said, “it is not to be understood that the hills and the valleys, the rocks and the rivers of our own moiety of the earth do not, physically speaking, bear a date as ancient as the spot on which the bricks of Babylon are found. It merely signifies that its moral existence is not coequal with its physical or geological formation.”

“Anan!” said the old man, looking up inquiringly into the face of the philosopher.

“Merely that it has not been so long known in morals as the other countries of Christendom.”

“So much the better, so much the better. I am no great admirator of your old morals, as you call them; for I have ever found, and I have lived long as it were in the very heart of *Natur*, that your old morals are none of the best. Mankind twist and turn the rules of the Lord to suit their own wickedness when their devilish cunning has had too much time to trifle with his commands.”

“Nay, venerable hunter, still am I not comprehended. By morals I do not mean the limited and literal signification of the term, such as is conveyed in its synonym, morality, but the practices of men as connected with their daily intercourse, their institutions and their laws.”

“And such I call barefaced and downright wantonness and waste,” interrupted his sturdy disputant.

“Well, be it so,” returned the doctor, abandoning the explanation in despair. “Perhaps I have conceded too much,” he then instantly added, fancying that he still saw the glimmerings of an argument through another chink in the discourse. “Perhaps I have conceded too much in saying that this hemisphere is literally as old as its formation as that which embraces the venerable quarters of Europe, Asia, and Africa.”

“It is easy to say a pine is not so tall as an alder, but it would be hard to prove. Can you give a reason for such a belief?”

“The reasons are numerous and powerful,” returned the doctor, delighted by this encouraging opening. “Look into the plains of Egypt and Arabia; their sandy deserts teem with the monuments of their antiquity; and then we have also recorded documents of their glory, doubling the proofs of their former greatness, now that they lie stripped of their fertility, while we look in vain for similar evidences that man has ever reached the summit of civilization on this continent, or search, without our reward, for the path by which he

has made the downward journey to his present condition of second childhood."

"And what see you in all this?" demanded the trapper, who, though a little confused by the terms of his companion, seized the thread of his ideas.

"A demonstration of my problem, that Nature did not make so vast a region to lie an uninhabited waste so many ages. This is merely the moral view of the subject; as to the more exact and geological——"

"Your morals are exact enough for me," returned the old man; for I think I see in them the very *pride of folly*. I am but little gifted in the fables of what you call the *Old World*, seeing that my time has been mainly passed looking Natur' steadily in the face, and in reasoning on what I've seen rather than on what I've heard in traditions. But I have never shut my ears to the words of the good book; and many is the long winter evening that I have passed in the wigwams of the Delawares, listening to the good Moravians, as they dealt forth the history and doctrines of the elder times to the people of the Lenape! It was pleasant to hearken to such wisdom after a weary hunt! Right pleasant did I find it, and often have I talked the matter over with the Great Serpent of the Delawares, in the more peaceful hours of our outlying, whether it might be on the trail of a war-party of the Mingoes, or on the watch for a York deer. I remember to have heard it, then and there, said, that the Blessed Land was once fertile as the bottoms of the Mississippi, and groaning with its stores of grain and fruits; but that the judgment has since fallen upon it, and that it is now more remarkable for its barrenness than any qualities to boast of."

"It is true; but Egypt, nay, much of Africa, furnishes still more striking proofs of this exhaustion of Nature."

"Tell me," interrupted the old man; "is it a certain truth that buildings are still standing in that land of Pharaoh, which may be likened, in their stature, to the hills of the 'arth?"

"It is as true as that Nature never refuses to bestow her incisors on the *animals*, *mammalia*; *genus*, *homo*——"

"It is very marvelous; and it proves

how great he must be, when his miserable creatur's can accomplish such wonders! Many men must have been needed to finish such an edifice; ay, and men gifted with strength and skill, too! Does the land abound with such a race to this hour?"

"Far from it. Most of the country is a desert, and but for a mighty river all would be so."

"Yes, rivers are rare gifts to such as till the ground; as any one may see who journeys far between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi. But how do you account for these changes of the face of the 'arth itself, and for this downfall of nations, you men of the schools?"

"It is to be ascribed to moral cau——"

"You're right—it is their morals; their wickedness and their pride, and chiefly their waste, that has done it all. Now, listen to what the experience of an old man teaches him. I have lived long, as these gray hairs and wrinkled hands will show; even though my tongue should fail in the wisdom of my years. And I have seen much of the folly of man, for his natur' is the same, be he born in the wilderness, or be he born in the towns. To my weak judgment it hath ever seemed that his gifts are not equal to his wishes. That he would mount into the heavens with all his deformities about him, if he only knew the road, no one will gainsay that witnesses his bitter strivings upon 'arth. If his power is not equal to his will, it is because the wisdom of the Lord hath set bounds to his evil workings."

"It is much too certain that certain facts will warrant a theory, which teaches the natural depravity of the *genus*; but, if science could be fairly brought to bear on a whole species at once, for instance, education might eradicate the evil principle."

"That, for your education! The time has been when I have thought it possible to make a companion of a beast. Many are the cubs, and many are the speckled fawns, that I have reared with these old hands, until I have even fancied them rational and altered beings—but what did it amount to? the bear would bite, and

the deer would run, notwithstanding my wicked conceit in fancying that I could change a temper that the Lord himself had seen fit to bestow. Now, if a man is so blinded in his folly as to go on, ages and ages, doing harm chiefly to himself, there is the same reason to think that he has wrought his evil here as in the countries you call so old. Look about you, man; where are the multitudes that once peopled these prairies; the kings and the palaces; the riches and the mightiness of this desert?"

"Where are the monuments that would prove the truth of so vague a theory?"

"I know not what you call a monument."

"The works of man! The glories of Thebes and Balbec—columns, catacombs, and pyramids—standing amid the sands of the East, like wrecks on a rocky shore, to testify to the storms of ages!"

"They are gone. Time has lasted too long for them. For why? Time was made by the Lord, and they were made by man. This very spot of reeds and grass, on which you now sit, may once have been the garden of some mighty king. It is the fate of all things to ripen, and then to decay. The tree blossoms, and bears its fruit, which falls, rots, withers, and even the seed is lost! Go count the rings of the oak and of the sycamore; they lie in circles, one about another, until the eye is blinded in striving to make out their numbers; and yet a full change of the season comes round while the stem is winding one of these little lines about itself, like the buffalo changing his coat, or the buck his horns; and what does it all amount to? There does the noble tree fill its place in the forest, loftier, and grander, and richer, and more difficult to imitate, than any of your pitiful pillars, for a thousand years, until the time which the Lord hath given it is full. Then come the winds, that you cannot see, to rive its bark; and the waters from the heavens, to soften its pores; and the rot, which all can feel and none can understand, to humble its pride, and bring it to the ground. From that moment, its beauty begins to perish. It lies another hundred years, a moldering

log, and then a mound of moss and 'arth, a sad effigy of a human grave. This is one of your genuine monuments, though made by a very different power than such as belongs to your chiseling masonry! and, after all, the cunningest scout of the whole Dahcotah nation might pass his life in searching for the spot where it fell, and be no wiser when his eyes grew dim than when they were first opened. As if that was not enough to convince man of his ignorance, and, as though it were put there in mockery of his conceit, a pine shoots up from the roots of the oak, just as barrenness comes after fertility, or as these wastes have been spread, where a garden may have been created. Tell me not of your worlds that are old! it is blasphemous to set bounds and seasons, in this manner, to the works of the Almighty, like a woman counting the ages of her young."

"Friend hunter, or trapper," returned the naturalist, clearing his throat in some intellectual confusion at the vigorous attack of his companion, "your deductions, if admitted by the world, would sadly circumscribe the efforts of reason, and much abridge the boundaries of knowledge."

"So much the better—so much the better; for I have always found that a conceited man never knows content. All things prove it. Why have we not the wings of the pigeon, the eyes of the eagle and the legs of the moose, if it had been intended that man should be equal to all his wishes?"

"There are certain physical defects, venerable trapper, in which I am always ready to admit great and happy alterations might be suggested. For example, in my own order of *Phalangacru*—"

"Cruel enough would be the order that should come from miserable hands like thine! A touch from such a finger would destroy the mocking deformity of a monkey! Go, go; human folly is not needed to fill up the great design of God. There is no stature, no beauty, no proportions, nor any colors in which man himself can well be fashioned that is not already done to his hands."

"That is touching another great and much-disputed question," exclaimed the doctor, who seized upon every distinct idea that the ardent and somewhat dogmatic old man left exposed to his mental grasp, with the vain hope of inducing a logical discussion, in which he might bring his battery of syllogisms to annihilate the unscientific defenses of his antagonist.

It is, however, unnecessary to our narrative to relate the erratic discourse that ensued. The old man eluded the annihilating blows of his adversary as the light-armed soldier is wont to escape the efforts of the more regular warrior, even while he annoys him most; and an hour passed away without bringing any of the numerous subjects on which they touched to a satisfactory conclusion. The arguments acted, however, on the nervous system of the doctor like so many soothing soporifics; and by the time his aged companion was disposed to lay his head on his pack, Obed, refreshed by his recent mental joust, was in a condition to seek his natural rest without enduring the torments of the incubus in the shapes of Teton warriors and bloody tomahawks

CHAPTER XXIII.

—"Save you, sir."—SHAKESPEARE.

THE sleep of the fugitives lasted for several hours. The trapper was the first to shake off its influence, as he had been the last to court its refreshment. Rising just as the gray light of day began to brighten that portion of the studded vault which rested on the eastern margin of the plain, he summoned his companions from their warm lairs, and pointed out the necessity of their being once more on the alert. While Middleton attended to the arrangements necessary to the comforts of Inez and Ellen, in the long and painful journey which lay before them, the old man and Paul prepared the meal which the former had advised them to take before they proceeded to horse. These several dispositions were not long in making, and the little group was soon seated about a

repast which, though it might want the elegances to which the bride of Middleton had been accustomed, was not deficient in the more important requisites of savor and nutriment.

"When we get lower into the hunting-grounds of the Pawnees," said the trapper, laying a morsel of delicate venison before Inez, on a little trencher neatly made of horn and expressly for his own use, "we shall find the buffaloes fatter and sweeter, the deer in more abundance, and all the gifts of the Lord abounding to satisfy our wants. Perhaps we may even strike a beaver and get a morsel from his tail* by way of a rare mouthful."

"What course do you mean to pursue, when you have once thrown these bloodhounds from the chase?" demanded Middleton.

"If I might advise," said Paul, "it would be to strike a water-course and get upon its downward current as soon as may be. Give me a cotton-wood, and I will turn you out a canoe that shall carry us all, the jackass excepted, in perhaps the work of a day and a night. Ellen, here, is a lively girl enough, but then she is no great race-rider, and it would be far more comfortable to boat six or eight hundred miles than to go loping along like so many elks measuring the prairies; besides, water leaves no trail."

"I will not swear to that," returned the trapper; "I have often thought the eyes of a red-skin would find a trail in air."

"See, Middleton," exclaimed Inez, in a sudden burst of youthful pleasure, that caused her for a moment to forget her situation, "how lovely is that sky; surely it contains a promise of happier times!"

"It is glorious!" returned her husband. "Glorious and heavenly is that streak of vivid red, and here is a still brighter crimson; rarely have I seen a richer rising of the sun."

"Rising of the sun!" slowly repeated the old man, lifting his tall person from its seat with a deliberate and abstracted air, while he kept his eye riveted on the

*The American hunters consider the tail of the beaver the most nourishing of all food.

changing and certainly beautiful tints that were varnishing the vault of heaven—"rising of the sun! I like not such risings of the sun! Ah's me! the imps have circumented us with a vengeance. The prairie is on fire!"

"God in heaven protect us!" cried Middleton, catching Inez to his bosom, under the instant impression of the imminence of their danger. "There is no time to lose, old man; each instant is a day. Let us fly!"

"Whither?" demanded the trapper, motioning him, with calmness and dignity, to arrest his steps. "In this wilderness of grass and reeds you are like a vessel in the broad lakes without a compass. A single step on the wrong course might prove the destruction of us all. It is seldom danger is so pressing that there is not time enough for reason to do its work, young officer; therefore let us wait its biddings."

"For my own part," said Paul Hover, looking about him with no equivocal expression of concern, "I acknowledge that, should this dry bed of weeds get fairly in a flame, a bee would have to make a flight higher than common to prevent his wings from scorching. Therefore, old trapper, I agree with the captain, and say mount and run."

"Ye are wrong—ye are wrong; man is not a beast to follow the gift of instinct, and to snuff up his knowledge by a taint in the air, or a rumbling in the ground; but he must see and reason, and then conclude. So follow me a little to the left, where there is a rise in the ground, whence we may make our reconnoiterings."

The old man waived his hand with authority and led the way, without further par lance, to the spot he had indicated, followed by the whole of his alarmed companions. An eye less practiced than that of the trapper might have failed in discovering the gentle elevation to which he alluded, and which looked on the surface of the meadow like a growth a little taller than common. When they reached the place, however, the stunted grass itself announced the absence of that moisture which had fed the rank weeds of most of the plain, and furnished a clew to the evi-

dence by which he had judged of the formation of the ground hidden beneath. Here a few minutes were lost in breaking down the tops of the surrounding herbage which, notwithstanding the advantage of their position, rose even above the heads of Middleton and Paul, and in obtaining a lookout that might command a view of the surrounding sea of fire.

The frightful prospect added nothing to the hopes of those who had so fearful a stake in the result. Although the day was beginning to dawn, the vivid colors of the sky continued to deepen, as if the fierce element were bent on an impious rivalry of the light of the sun. Bright flashes of flame shot up here and there along the margin of the waste like the nimble coruscations of the north, but far more angry and threatening in their color and changes. The anxiety on the rigid features of the trapper sensibly deepened as he leisurely traced those evidences of conflagration, which spread in a broad belt about their place of refuge, until he had encircled the whole horizon.

Shaking his head as he again turned his face to the point where the danger seemed nighest and most rapidly approaching, the old man said—

"Now, have we been cheating ourselves with the belief that we had thrown these Tetons from our trail, while here is proof enough that they not only know where we lie, but they intend to smoke us out like so many skulking beasts of prey. See! they have lighted the fire around the whole bottom at the same moment, and we are as completely hemmed in by the devils as an island by its waters."

"Let us mount and ride!" cried Middleton; "is life not worth a struggle?"

"Whither would you go? Is a Teton horse a salamander, that can walk amid fiery flames unhurt, or do you think the Lord will show his might in your behalf, as in the days of old, and carry you harmless through such a furnace as you may see glowing beneath yonder red sky? There are Sioux, too, hemming the fire with their arrows and knives at every side of us, or I am no judge of their murderous deviltries."

"We will ride into the center of the whole tribe," returned the youth, fiercely, "and put their manhood to the test."

"Ay, it's well in words, but what would it prove in deeds? Here is a dealer in bees, who can teach you wisdom in a matter like this."

"Now, for that matter, old trapper," said Paul, stretching his athletic form like a mastiff conscious of his strength, "I am on the side of the captain, and am clearly for a race against the fire, though it line me into a Teton wigwam. Here is Ellen, who will——"

"Of what use—of what use are your stout hearts, when the element of the Lord is to be conquered as well as human men? Look about you, friends: the wreath of smoke, that is rising from the bottoms, plainly says that there is no outlet from the spot without crossing a belt of fire. Look for yourselves, my men; look for yourselves; if you can find a single opening, I will engage to follow."

The examination, which his companions so instantly and so intently made, rather served to assure them of their desperate situation than to appease their fears. Huge columns of smoke were rolling up from the plain, and thickening in gloomy masses around the horizon; the red glow which gleamed upon their enormous folds now lighting their volumes with the glare of the conflagration, and now flashing to another point, as the flames beneath glided ahead, leaving all behind enveloped in awful darkness, and proclaiming louder than words the character of the imminent and approaching danger.

"This is terrible!" exclaimed Middleton, folding the trembling Inez to his heart—"at such a time as this, and in such a manner!"

"The gates of Heaven are open to all who truly believe," murmured the pious devotee in his bosom.

"This resignation is maddening! But we are men, and will make a struggle for our lives! How now, my brave and spirited friend; shall we yet mount and push across the flame, or shall we stand here, and see those we most love perish in this frightful manner, without an effort?"

"I am for a swarming-time, and a flight before the hive is too hot to hold us," said the bee-hunter, to whom it will be at once seen that Middleton addressed himself. "Come, old trapper, you must acknowledge that this is but a slow way of getting out of danger. If we tarry here much longer, it will be in the fashion that the bees lie around the straw after the hive has been smoked for its honey. You may hear the fire begin to roar already, and I know by experience that, when the flame once gets fairly into the prairie-grass, it is no sloth that can outrun it."

"Think you," returned the old man, pointing scornfully at the mazes of the dry and matted grass which environed them, "that mortal feet can outstrip the speed of fire on such a path? If I only knew, now, on which side these miscreants lay!"

"What say you, friend doctor," cried the bewildered Paul, turning to the naturalist with that sort of helplessness with which the strong are often apt to seek aid of the weak when human power is baffled by the hand of a mightier Being, "what say you? Have you no advice to give away in a case of life and death?"

The naturalist stood, tablets in hand, looking at the awful spectacle with as much composure as if the conflagration had been lighted in order to solve the difficulties of some scientific problem. Aroused by the question of his companion, he turned to his equally calm though differently occupied associate, the trapper, demanding, with the most provoking insensibility to the urgent nature of their situation:

"Venerable hunter, you have often witnessed similar prismatic experiments——"

He was rudely interrupted by Paul, who struck the tablets from his hands with a violence that betrayed the utter intellectual confusion which had overset the equanimity of his mind. Before time was allowed for remonstrance, the old man, who had continued during the whole scene like one much at a loss how to proceed, though also like one who was rather perplexed than alarmed, suddenly assumed a decided air, as if he no longer doubted on the course it was most advisable to pursue.

"It is time to be doing," he said, inter-

rupting the controversy that was about to ensue between the naturalist and the bee-hunter; "it is time to leave off books and moanings, and to be doing."

"You have come to your recollections too late, miserable old man!" cried Middleton; "the flames are within a quarter of a mile of us, and the wind is bringing them down in this quarter with dreadful rapidity."

"Anan! the flames! I care but little for the flames. If I only knew how to circumvent the cunning of the Tetons as I know how to cheat the fire of its prey, there would be nothing needed but thanks to the Lord for our deliverance. Do you call this a fire? If you had seen what I have witnessed in the Eastern hills, when mighty mountains were like the furnace of a smith, you would have known what it was to fear the flames, and to be thankful that you were spared. Come, lads, come; 'tis time to be doing now, and to cease talking; for yonder curling flame is truly coming on like a trotting moose. Put hands upon this short and withered grass where we stand, and lay bare the 'arth.'"

"Would you think to deprive the fire of its victims in this childish manner?" exclaimed Middleton.

A faint but solemn smile passed over the features of the old man as he answered—

"Your grand'ther would have said that, when the enemy was nigh, a soldier could do no better than to obey."

The captain felt the reproof and instantly began to imitate the industry of Paul, who was tearing the decayed herbage from the ground in a sort of desperate compliance with the trapper's direction. Even Ellen lent her hands to the labor, nor was it long before Inez was seen similarly employed, though none among them knew why or wherefore. When life is thought to be the reward of labor, men are wont to be industrious. A very few moments sufficed to lay bare a spot of some twenty feet in diameter. Into one edge of this little area the trapper brought the females, directing Middleton and Paul to cover their light and inflammable dresses with the blankets of the party.

So soon as this precaution was observed, the old man approached the opposite margin of the grass, which still environed them in a tall and dangerous circle, and, selecting a handful of the driest of the herbage, he placed it over the pan of his rifle. The light combustible kindled at the flash. Then he placed the little flame in a bed of the standing fog, and withdrawing from the spot to the center of the ring, he patiently awaited the result.

The subtle element seized with avidity upon its new fuel, and in a moment forked flames were gliding among the grass, as the tongues of ruminating animals are seen rolling among their food, apparently in quest of its sweetest portions.

"Now," said the old man, holding up a finger, and laughing in his peculiarly silent manner, "you shall see fire fight fire! Ah's me! many is the time I have burnt a smoothy path, from wanton laziness to pick my way across a tangled bottom."

"But is this not fatal?" cried the amazed Middleton; "are you not bringing the enemy nigher to us instead of avoiding it?"

"Do you scorch so easily? Your grand'ther had a tougher skin. But we shall all live to see—we shall all live to see."

The experience of the trapper was in the right. As the fire gained strength and heat, it began to spread on three sides, dying of itself on the fourth, for want of aliment. As it increased, and the sullen roaring announced its power, it cleared everything before it, leaving the black and smoking soil far more naked than if the scythe had swept the place. The situation of the fugitives would have still been hazardous had not the area enlarged as the flame encircled them. But by advancing to the spot where the trapper had kindled the grass, they avoided the heat, and in a very few moments the flames began to recede in every quarter, leaving them enveloped in a cloud of smoke, but perfectly safe from the torrent of fire that was still furiously rolling onward.

The spectators regarded the simple expedient of the trapper with that species

of wonder with which the courtiers of Ferdinand are said to have viewed the manner in which Columbus made his egg stand on its end, though with feelings that were filled with gratitude instead of envy.

"Most wonderful!" said Middleton, when he saw the complete success of the means by which they had been rescued from a danger that he had conceived to be unavoidable. "The thought was a gift from heaven, and the hand that executed it should be immortal!"

"Old trapper," cried Paul, thrusting his fingers through his shaggy locks, "I have lined many a loaded bee into his hole, and know something of the nature of the woods, but this is robbing a hornet of his sting without touching the insect!"

"It will do—it will do," returned the old man, who, after the first moment of his success seemed to think no more of the exploit; "now get the horses in readiness. Let the flames do their work for a short half-hour, and then we will mount. That time is needed to cool the meadow, for these unshod Teton beasts are as tender on the hoof as a barefooted girl."

Middleton and Paul, who considered this unlooked-for escape as a species of resurrection, patiently awaited the time the trapper mentioned with renewed confidence in the infallibility of his judgment. The doctor regained his tablets, a little the worse from having fallen among the grass which had been subject to the action of the flames, and was consoling himself for this slight misfortune by recording uninterruptedly such different vacillations in light and shadow as he chose to consider phenomena.

In the meantime the veteran, on whose experience they all so implicitly relied for protection, employed himself in reconnoitering objects in the distance, through the openings which the air occasionally made in the immense bodies of smoke that by this time lay in enormous piles on every part of the plain.

"Look you here, lads," the trapper said, after a long and anxious examination, "your eyes are young and may prove better than my worthless sight—though the

time has been when a wise and brave people saw reason to think me quick on a look-out; but those times are gone, and many a true and tried friend has passed away with them. Ah's me! if I could choose a change in the orderings of Providence—which I cannot, and which it would be blasphemy to attempt, seeing that all things are governed by a wiser mind than belongs to mortal weakness—but if I were to choose a change, it would be to say that such as they who have lived long together in friendship and kindness, and who have proved their fitness to go in company, by many acts of suffering and daring in each other's behalf, should be permitted to give up life at such times as when the death of one leaves the other but little reason to live."

"Is it an Indian that you see?" demanded the impatient Middleton.

"Red-skin or white-skin, it is much the same. Friendship and use can tie men as strongly together in the woods as in the towns—ay, and for that matter, stronger. Here are the young warriors of the prairies. Often do they sort themselves in pairs, and set apart their lives for deeds of friendship; and well and truly do they act up to their promises. The death-blow to one is commonly mortal to the other! I have been a solitary man much of my time, if he can be called solitary who has lived for seventy years in the very bosom of Natur', and where he could at any instant open his heart to God without having to strip it of the cares and wickednesses of the settlements—but, making that allowance, have I been a solitary man; and yet have I always found that intercourse with my kind was pleasant, and painful to break off, provided that the companion was brave and honest—brave, because a skeary comrade in the woods," suffering his eyes inadvertently to rest a moment on the person of the abstracted naturalist, "is apt to make a short path long; and honest, inasmuch as craftiness is rather an instinct of the brutes than a gift becoming the reason of a human man."

"But the object that you saw—was it a Sioux?"

"What the world of America is coming

to, and where the machinations and inventions of its people are to have an end, the Lord, he only knows. I have seen in my day the chief who, in his time, had beheld the first Christian that placed his wicked foot in the regions of York! How much has the beauty of the wilderness been deformed in two short lives! My own eyes were first opened on the shore of the Eastern sea, and well do I remember that I tried the virtues of the first rifle I ever bore, after such a march, from the door of my father to the forest, as a stripling could make between sun and sun; and that without offense to the rights or prejudices of any man who set himself up to be the owner of the beasts of the field. Nature then lay in its glory along the whole coast, giving a narrow stripe, between the woods and the ocean, to the greediness of the settlers. And where am I now? Had I the wings of an eagle, they would tire before a tenth of the distance, which separates me from that sea, could be passed; and towns and villages, farms and highways, churches and schools, in short, all the inventions and devilries of man, are spread across the region. I have known the time when a few red-skins, shouting along the border, could set the provinces in a fever; and men were to be armed; and troops were to be called to aid from a distant land; and prayers were said, and the women frightened, and few slept in quiet, because the Iroquois were on the war-path, or the accursed Mingo had the tomahawk in hand. How is it now? The country sends out her ships to foreign lands to wage their battles; cannon are plentier than the rifle used to be; and trained soldiers are never wanting, in tens of thousands, when need calls for their services. Such is the difference between a province and a State, my men; and I, miserable and worn out as I seem, have lived to see it all!"

"That you must have seen many a chopper skimming the cream from the face of the earth, and many a settler getting the very honey of Nature, old trapper," said Paul, "no reasonable man can, or, for that matter, shall doubt. But here is Ellen getting uneasy about the Sioux, and now you have opened your

mind so freely concerning these matters, if you will just put us on the line of our flight, the swarm will make another move."

"Anan!"

"I say that Ellen is getting uneasy; and as the smoke is lifting from the plain, it may be prudent to take another flight."

"The boy is reasonable. I had forgotten we were in the midst of a raging fire, and that the Sioux were round about us like hungry wolves watching a drove of buffaloes. But when memory is at work in my old brain, on times long past, it is apt to overlook the matters of the day. You say right, my children; it is time to be moving, and now comes the real nicety of our case. It is easy to outwit a furnace, for it is nothing but a raging element; and it is not always difficult to throw a grizzly bear from his scent, for the creature is both enlightened and blinded by his instinct; but to shut the eyes of a waking Teton is a matter of greater judgment, inasmuch as his deviltry is backed by reason."

Notwithstanding the old man appeared so conscious of the difficulty of the undertaking, he set about its achievement with great steadiness and alacrity. After completing the examination, which had been interrupted by the melancholy wanderings of his mind, he gave the signal to his companions to mount. The horses, which had continued passive and trembling amid the raging of the fire, received their burdens with a satisfaction so very evident as to furnish a favorable augury of their future industry. The trapper invited the doctor to take his own steed, declaring his intention to proceed on foot.

"I am but little used to journeying with the feet of others," he added, as a reason for the measure, "and my legs are a weary of doing nothing. Besides, should we light suddenly on an ambushment, which is a thing far from impossible, the horse will be in a better condition for a hard run with one man on his back than with two. As for me, what matters it whether my time is to be a day shorter or a day longer? Let the Tetons take my

scalp, if it be God's pleasure; they will find it covered with gray hairs; and it is beyond the craft of man to cheat me of the knowledge and experience by which they have been whitened."

As no one among the impatient listeners seemed disposed to dispute the arrangement; it was acceded to in silence. The doctor, although he uttered a few mourning exclamations on behalf of the lost Asinus, was by far too well pleased in finding that his speed was likely to be sustained by four legs instead of two, to be long in complying; and, consequently, in a very few moments the bee-hunter, who was never last to speak on such occasions, vociferously announced that they were ready to proceed.

"Now look off yonder to the east," said the old man, as he began to lead the way across the murky and still smoking plain; "little fear of cold feet in journeying such a path as this; but look you off to the east, and if you see a sheet of shining white, glistening like a plate of beaten silver through the openings of the smoke, why, that is water. A noble stream is running thereaway, and I thought I got a glimpse of it a while since; but other thoughts came, and I lost it. It is a broad and swift river, such as the Lord has made many of its fellows in this desert. For here may Natur' be seen in all its richness, trees alone excepted. Trees, which are to the 'arth as fruits are to a garden; without them nothing can be pleasant or thoroughly useful. Now watch, all of you, with open eyes, for that stripe of glittering water; we shall not be safe until it is flowing between our trail and these sharp-sighted Tetons."

The latter declaration was enough to insure a vigilant lookout for the desired stream, on the part of all the trapper's followers. With this object in view, the party proceeded in profound silence, the old man having admonished them of the necessity of caution, as they entered the clouds of smoke, which were rolling like masses of fog along the plain, more particularly over those spots where the fire had encountered occasional pools of stagnant water.

They traveled near a league in this manner without obtaining the desired glimpse of the river. The fire was still raging in the distance, and, as the air swept away the first vapor of the conflagration, fresh volumes rolled along the place, limiting the view. At length the old man, who had begun to betray some little uneasiness, which caused his followers to apprehend that even his acute faculties were beginning to be confused in the mazes of the smoke, made a sudden pause, and, dropping his rifle to the ground, he stood, apparently musing over some object at his feet. Middleton and the rest rode up to his side, and demanded the reason of the halt.

"Look ye here," returned the trapper, pointing to the mutilated carcass of a horse that lay more than half consumed in a little hollow of the ground; "here may you see the power of a prairie conflagration. The 'arth is moist, hereaway, and the grass has been taller than usual. This miserable beast has been caught in his bed. You see the bones, the crackling and scorched hide, and the grinning teeth. A thousand winters could not wither an animal so thoroughly as the element has done it in a minute."

"And this might have been our fate," said Middleton, "had the flames come upon us in our sleep!"

"Nay, I do not say that, I do not say that. Not but that man will burn as well as tinder; but that, being more reasoning than a horse, he would better know how to avoid the danger."

"Perhaps this, then, has been but the carcass of an animal, or he too would have fled?"

"See you these marks in the damp soil? Here have been his hoofs, and there is a moccasin-print, as I'm a sinner! The owner of the beast has tried hard to move him from the place, but it is in the instinct of the creatur' to be faint-hearted and obstinate in a fire."

"It is a well-known fact. But if the animal has had a rider, where is he?"

"Ay, therein lies the mystery," returned the trapper, stooping to examine the signs in the ground with closer eye.

"Yes, yes, it is plain there has been a long struggle between the two. The master has tried hard to save his beast, and the flames must have been very greedy, or he would have had better success."

"Harkee, old trapper," interrupted Paul, pointing to a little distance, where the ground was drier, and the herbage had, in consequence, been less luxuriant; "just call them two horses. Yonder lies another."

"The boy is right! Can it be that the Tetons have been caught in their own snares? Such things do happen; and here is an example to all evil-doers. Ay, look you here, this is iron; there have been some white inventions about the trappings of the beast—it must be so—it must be so—a party of the knaves have been skirting in the grass after us, while their friends have fired the prairie, and look you at the consequences; they have lost their beasts, and happy have they been if their own souls are not now skirting along the path which leads to the Indian heaven."

"They had the same expedient at command as yourself," rejoined Middleton, as the party slowly proceeded, approaching the other carcass, which lay directly on their route.

"I know not that. It is not every savage that carries his steel and flint, or as good a rifle-pan as this old friend of mine. It is slow making a fire with two sticks, and little time was given to consider or invent just at this spot, as you may see by yon streak of flame, which is flashing along afore the wind, as if it were on a trail of powder. It is not many minutes since the fire has passed here-away, and it may be well to look at our primings; not that I would willingly combat the Tetons, God forbid! but if a fight needs be, it is always wise to get the first shot."

"This has been a strange beast, old man," said Paul, who had pulled the bridle, or rather halter of his steed, over the second carcass, while the rest of the party were already passing, in their eagerness to proceed; "a strange horse do I call it; it had neither head nor hoofs!"

"The fire has not been idle," returned the trapper, keeping his eye vigilantly employed in profiting by those glimpses of the horizon which the whirling smoke offered to his examination. "It would soon bake you a buffalo whole, or for that matter powder his hoofs and horns into white ashes. Shame, shame, old Hector! As for the captain's pup, it is to be expected that he would show his want of years, and I may say, I hope without offense, his want of education, too; but for a hound like you, who have lived so long in the forest afore you came into these plains, it is very disgraceful, Hector, to be showing your teeth, and growling at the carcass of a roasted horse, the same as if you were telling your master that you had found the trail of a grizzly bear."

"I tell you, old trapper, this is no horse; neither in hoofs, head, nor hide."

"Anan! Not a horse? your eyes are good for the bees and for the hollow trees, my lad, but—bless me, the boy is right! That I should mistake the hide of a buffalo, scorched and crimped as it is, for the carcass of a horse! Ah's me! The time has been, my men, when I would tell you the name of a beast as far as eye could reach, and that too with most of the particulars of color, age, and sex."

"An inestimable advantage have you then enjoyed, venerable venator!" observed the attentive naturalist. "The man who can make these distinctions in a desert is saved the pain of many a weary walk, and often of an inquiry that in its result proves useless. Pray tell me, did your exceeding excellence of vision extend so far as to enable you to decide on their *order* and *genus*?"

"I know not what you mean by your orders of genius."

"No!" interrupted the bee-hunter, a little disdainfully for him, when speaking to his aged friend; "now, old trapper, that is admitting your ignorance of the English language in a way I should not expect from a man of your experience and understanding. By order, our comrade means whether they go in promiscuous droves, like a swarm that is following its queen-bee, or in single file, as you often

see the buffaloes trailing each other through a prairie. And as for genius, I'm sure *that* is a word well understood, and in everybody's mouth. There is the Congressman in our district, and that tonguey little fellow who puts out the paper in our country, they are both so called, for their smartness; which is what the doctor means, as I take it, seeing that he seldom speaks without some considerable meaning."

When Paul finished this very clever explanation he looked behind him with an expression which, rightly interpreted, would have said—"You see, though I don't often trouble myself in these matters, I am no fool."

Ellen admired Paul for anything but his learning. There was enough in his frank, fearless, and manly character, backed as it was by great personal attraction, to awaken her sympathies, without the necessity of prying into his mental attainments. The poor girl reddened like a rose, her pretty fingers played with the belt by which she sustained herself on the horse, and she hurriedly observed, as if anxious to direct the attention of the other listeners from a weakness on which her own thoughts could not bear to dwell:

"And this is not a horse, after all?"

"It is nothing more nor less than the hide of a buffalo," continued the trapper, who had been no less puzzled by the explanation of Paul than by the language of the doctor; "the hair is beneath; the fire has run over it as you see; for, being fresh, the flames could take no hold. The beast has not been long killed, and it may be that some of the beef is still hereaway."

"Lift the corner of the skin, old trapper," said Paul with the tone of one who felt as if he had now proved his right to mingle his voice in any counsel; "if there is a morsel of the hump left, it must be well cooked, and it shall be welcome."

The old man laughed heartily at the conceit of his companion. Thrusting his foot beneath the skin, it moved. Then it was suddenly cast aside, and an Indian warrior sprang from its cover to his feet, with an agility that he poke how urgent he deemed the occasion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I would it were bedtime, Hal, and all well."

—SHAKESPEARE.

A SECOND glance sufficed to convince the whole of the startled party that the young Pawnee, whom they had already encountered, again stood before them. Surprise kept both sides mute, and more than a minute was passed in surveying each other with eyes of astonishment if not of distrust. The wonder of the young warrior was, however, much more tempered and dignified than that of his Christian acquaintances. While Middleton and Paul felt the tremor which shook the persons of their dependent companions thrilling through their own quickened blood, the glowing eye of the Indian rolled from one to another as if it could never quail before the rudest assaults. His gaze, after making the circuit of every wondering countenance, finally settled in a steady look on the equally immovable features of the trapper. The silence was first broken by Dr. Battius, in the ejaculation of—

"*Order, primates; genus, homo; species, prairie!*"

"Ay—ay—the secret is out," said the old trapper, shaking his head, like one who congratulated himself on having mastered the mystery of some knotty difficulty. "The lad has been in the grass for cover; the fire has come upon him in his sleep, and, having lost his horse, he has been driven to save himself under that fresh hide of a buffalo. No bad invention, when powder and flint were wanting to kindle a ring. I warrant me, now, this is a clever youth, and one that it would be safe to journey with! I will speak to him kindly, for anger can at least serve no turn of ours.—My brother is welcome again," using the language which the other understood; "the Tetons have been smoking him as they would a raccoon."

The young Pawnee rolled his eyes over the place, as if he were examining the terrific danger from which he had just escaped, but he disdained to betray the smallest emotion at its imminency. His

brow contracted as he answered to the remark of the trapper by saying :

"A Teton is a dog. When the Pawnee war-whoop is in their ears the whole nation howls."

"It is true. The imps are on our trail, and I am glad to meet a warrior with the tomahawk in his hand, who does not love them! Will my brother lead my children to his village? If the Sioux follow on our path, my young men shall help him to strike them."

The young Pawnee turned his eyes from one to another of the strangers in a keen scrutiny, before he saw fit to answer so important an interrogatory. His examination of the males was short, and apparently satisfactory. But his gaze was fastened long and admiringly, as in their former interview, on the surpassing and unwonted beauty of a being so fair and so unknown as Inez. Though his glance wandered, for moments, from her countenance to the more intelligible and yet extraordinary charms of Ellen, it did not fail to return promptly to the study of a creature who, in the view of his unpracticed eye and untutored imagination, was formed with all that perfection with which the youthful poet is apt to endow the glowing images of his brain. Nothing so fair, so ideal, so every way worthy to reward the courage and self-devotion of a warrior had ever before been encountered on the prairies, and the young brave appeared to be deeply and intuitively sensible to the influence of so rare a model of the loveliness of the sex. Perceiving, however, that his gaze gave uneasiness to the subject of his admiration, he withdrew his eyes and, laying his hand impressively on his chest, he modestly answered—

"My father shall be welcome. The young men of my nation shall hunt with his sons; the chiefs shall smoke with the gray-head. The Pawnee girls will sing in the ears of his daughters."

"And if we meet the Tetons?" demanded the trapper, who wished to understand, thoroughly, the more important conditions of this new alliance.

"The enemy of the Big-knives shall feel the blow of the Pawnee."

"It is well. Now, let my brother and I meet in counsel, that we may not go on a crooked path, but that our road to his village may be like the flight of the pigeons."

The young Pawnee made a significant gesture of assent, and followed the other a little apart, in order to be removed from all danger of interruption from the reckless Paul or the abstracted naturalist. Their conference was short, but, as it was conducted in the sententious manner of the natives, it served to make each of the parties acquainted with all the necessary information of the other. When they rejoined their associates, the old man saw fit to explain a portion of what had passed between them as follows :

"Ay, I was not mistaken," he said; "this good-looking young warrior—for good-looking and noble-looking he is, though a little horrified, perhaps, with paint—this good-looking youth, then, tells me he is out on the scout for these very Tetons. His party was not strong enough to strike the devils, who are down from their towns in great numbers to hunt the buffalo, and runners have gone to the Pawnee villages for aid. It would seem that this lad is a fearless boy, for he has been hanging on their skirts alone, until, like ourselves, he was driven to the grass for a cover. But he tells me more, my men, and what I am mainly sorry to hear, which is, that the cunning Mahtoree, instead of going to blows with the squatter, has become his friend, and that both broods, red and white, are on our heels, and out-lying around this very burning plain to circumvent us to our destruction."

"How knows he all this to be true?" demanded Middleton.

"Anan!"

"In what manner does he know that these things are so?"

"In what manner! Do you think newspapers and town-criers are needed to tell a scout what is doing on the prairies, as they are in the bosom of the States? No gossiping woman, who hurries from house to house to spread evil of her neighbor, can carry tidings with her tongue so fast as these people will spread their meaning, by signs and warnings that they alone

understand. 'Tis their l'arning, and, what is better, it is got in the open air, and not within the walls of a school. I tell you, captain, that what he says is true."

"For that matter," said Paul, "I'm ready to swear to it. It is reasonable, and therefore it must be true."

"And well you might, lad—well you might. He furthermore declares that my old eyes for once were true to me, and that the river lies, hereaway, at about the distance of half a league. You see the fire has done most of its work in that quarter, and our path is clouded in smoke. He also agrees that it is needful to wash our trail in water. Yes, we must put that river between us and the Sioux eyes, and then, by the favor of the Lord, not forgetting our own industry, we may gain the village of the Loups."

"Words will not forward us a foot," said Middleton, "let us move."

The old man assented, and the party once more prepared to renew its route. The Pawnee threw the skin of the buffalo over his shoulder and led the advance, casting many a stolen glance behind him as he proceeded, in order to fix his gaze on the extraordinary and, to him, unaccountable loveliness of the unconscious Inez.

An hour sufficed to bring the fugitives to the bank of the stream, which was one of the hundred rivers that serve to conduct, through the mighty arteries of the Missouri and Mississippi, the waters of that vast and still uninhabited region to the ocean. The river was not deep, but its current was troubled and rapid.

The flames had scorched the earth to its very margin, and as the warm streams of the fluid mingled, in the cooler air of the morning, with the smoke of the raging conflagration, most of its surface was wrapped in a mantle of moving vapor. The trapper pointed out the circumstance with pleasure, saying, as he assisted Inez to dismount on the margin of the water-course :

"The knaves have outwitted themselves! I am far from certain that I should not have fired the prairie to have got the benefit of this very smoke to hide our

movements, had not the heartless imps saved us the trouble. I've known such things done in my day, and done with success. Come, lady, put your tender foot upon the ground—for a fearful time has it been to one of your breeding and skeary qualities. Ah's me! what have I not known the young, and the delicate, and the virtuous, and the modest, to undergo, in my time, among the horrors and circumventions of Indian warfare! Come, it is a short quarter of a mile to the other bank, and then our trail, at least, will be broken."

Paul had by this time assisted Ellen to dismount, and he now stood looking, with rueful eyes, at the naked banks of the river. Neither tree nor shrub grew along its borders, with the exception of here and there a solitary thicket of low bushes, from among which it would not have been an easy matter to have found a dozen stems of a size sufficient to make an ordinary walking-stick.

"Harkee, old trapper," the moody-looking bee-hunter exclaimed; "it is very well to talk of the other side of this ripple of a river, or brook, or whatever you may call it, but in my judgment it would be a smart rifle that would throw its lead across it—that is, to any detriment to Indian or deer."

"That it would—that it would; though I carry a piece here that has done its work, in time of need, at as great a distance."

"And do you mean to shoot Ellen and the captain's lady across, or do you intend them to go, trout-fashion, with their mouths under water?"

"Is this river too deep to be forded?" asked Middleton, who, like Paul, began to consider the impossibility of transporting her whose safety he valued more than his own to the opposite shore.

"When the mountains above feed it with their torrents, it is, as you see, a swift and powerful stream. Yet have I crossed its sandy bed, in my time, without wetting a knee. But we have the Sioux horses; I warrant me that the kicking imps will swim like so many deer."

"Old trapper," said Paul, thrusting

his fingers into his mop of a head, as was usual with him when any difficulty confounded his philosophy, "I have swum like a fish in my day, and I can do it again, when there is need; nor do I much regard the weather; but I question if you get Nelly to sit a horse, with this water whirling like a mill-race before her eyes; besides it is manifest the thing is not to be done dry shod."

"Ah, the lad is right. We must to our inventions, therefore, or the river cannot be crossed." Then, cutting the discourse short, he turned to the Pawnee, and explained to him the difficulty which existed in relation to the women. The young warrior listened gravely, and, throwing the buffalo-skin from his shoulder, he immediately commenced, assisted by the occasional aid of the understanding old man, the preparations necessary to effect his desirable object.

The hide was soon drawn into the shape of an umbrella top, or an inverted parachute, by thongs of deerskin, with which both the laborers were well provided. A few light sticks served to keep the parts from collapsing, or falling in. When this simple and natural expedient was arranged, it was placed on the water, the Indian making a sign that it was ready to receive its freight. Both Inez and Ellen hesitated to trust themselves in a bark of so frail a construction, nor would Middleton or Paul consent that they should do so until each had assured himself, by actual experiment, that the vessel was capable of sustaining a load much heavier than it was destined to receive. Then, indeed, their scruples were reluctantly overcome, and the skin was made ready to receive its precious burden.

"Now leave the Pawnee to be the pilot," said the trapper; "my hand is not so steady as it used to be, but he has limbs like toughened hickory. Leave all to the wisdom of the Pawnee."

The husband and lover could not well do otherwise, and they were fain to become deeply interested, it is true, but passive spectators of this primitive species of ferrying. The Pawnee selected the beast of Mahtoree from among the three

horses, with a readiness that proved he was far from being ignorant of the properties of that noble animal, and throwing himself upon its back, he rode into the margin of the river. Thrusting an end of his lance into the hide, he bore the light vessel up against the stream, and giving his steed the rein, they pushed boldly into the current. Middleton and Paul followed, pressing as nigh the bark as prudence would at all warrant. In this manner the young warrior bore his precious cargo to the opposite bank in perfect safety, without the slightest inconvenience to the passengers, and with a steadiness and celerity which proved that both horse and rider were not unused to the operation. When the shore was gained the young Indian undid his work, threw the skin over his shoulder, placed the sticks under his arm, and returned, without speaking, to transfer the remainder of the party, in a similar manner, to what was very justly considered the safer side of the river.

"Now, friend doctor," said the old man, when he saw the Indian plunging into the river a second time, "do I know there is faith in yonder red-skin. He is good-looking, ay, and an honest-looking youth, but the winds of Heaven are not more deceitful than these savages when the devil has fairly beset them. Had the Pawnee been a Teton, or one of them heartless Mingoes that used to be prowling through the woods of York a time back, that is, some sixty years ago, we should have seen his back and not his face turned toward us. My heart had its misgivings when I saw the lad choose the better horse, for it would be as easy to leave us with that beast as it would for a nimble pigeon to part company from a flock of noisy and heavy-winged crows. But you see that truth is in the boy, and make a red-skin once your friend, he is yours so long as you deal honestly by him."

"What may be the distance to the sources of this stream?" demanded Dr. Battius, whose eyes were rolling over the whirling eddies of the current, with a very portentous expression of doubt. "At what distance may its secret springs be found?"

"That may be as the weather proves. I warrant me your legs would be a-weary before you had followed its bed into the Rocky Mountains; but then there are seasons when it might be done without wetting a foot."

"And in what particular divisions of the year do these periodical seasons occur?"

"He that passes this spot a few months from this time will find that foaming water-course a desert of drifting sand."

The naturalist pondered deeply. Like most others who are not endowed with a superfluity of physical fortitude, the worthy man had found the danger of passing the river in so simple a manner, magnifying itself in his eyes so rapidly, as the moment of adventure approached, that he actually contemplated the desperate effort of going round the river in order to escape the hazard of crossing it. It may not be necessary to dwell on the incredible ingenuity with which terror will at any time prop a tottering argument. The worthy Obed had gone over the whole subject with commendable diligence, and had just arrived at the consoling conclusion that there was nearly as much glory in discerning the hidden sources of so considerable a stream as in adding a plant or an insect to the lists of the learned, when the Pawnee reached the shore for the second time. The old man took his seat with the utmost deliberation in the vessel of skin (so soon as it had been duly arranged for his reception), and, having carefully disposed of Hector between his legs, he beckoned to his companion to occupy the third place.

The naturalist placed a foot in the frail vessel, as an elephant will try a bridge, or a horse is seen to make a similar experiment before he will trust the whole of his corporeal treasure on the dreaded flat, and then withdrew just as the old man believed he was about to seat himself.

"Venerable venator," he said, mournfully, "this is a most unscientific bark. There is an inward monitor which bids me distrust its security!"

"Anan!" said the old man, who was pinching the ears of the hound, as a father

would play with the same member in a favorite child.

"I incline not to this irregular mode of experimenting on fluids. The vessel has neither form nor proportions."

"It is not as handsomely turned as I have seen a canoe in birchen bark, but comfort may be taken in a wigwam as well as in a palace."

"It is impossible that any vessel constructed on principles so repugnant to science can be safe. This tub, venerable hunter, will never reach the opposite shore in safety."

"You are a witness of what it has done."

"Ay; but it was an anomaly in prosperity. If exceptions were to be taken as rules in the government of things, the human race would speedily be plunged into the abysses of ignorance. Venerable trapper, this expedient in which you would repose your safety is, in the annals of regular inventions, what a *lusus naturæ* may be termed in the lists of natural history—a monster!"

How much longer Dr. Battius might have been felt disposed to prolong the discourse it is difficult to say, for, in addition to the powerful personal considerations which induced him to procrastinate an experiment which was certainly not without its dangers, the pride of reason was beginning to sustain him in the discussion. But fortunately for the credit of the old man's forbearance, when the naturalist reached the word with which he terminated his last speech, a sound arose in the air that seemed a sort of supernatural echo to the idea itself. The young Pawnee, who had awaited the termination of the incomprehensible discussion with grave and characteristic patience, raised his head and listened to the unknown cry, like a stag whose mysterious faculties had detected the footsteps of the distant hounds in the gale. The trapper and the doctor were not, however, entirely so uninstructed as to the nature of the extraordinary sounds. The latter recognized in them the well-known sounds of his own beast, and he was about to rush up the little bank which confined the current, with all the

longings of strong affection, when Asinus himself galloped into view, at no great distance, urged to the unnatural gait by the impatient and brutal Weucha, who bestrode him.

The eyes of the Teton and those of the fugitives met. The former raised a long, loud, and piercing yell, in which the notes of exultation were fearfully blended with those of warning. The signal served for a finishing blow to the discussion on the merits of the bark, the doctor stepping as promptly to the side of the old man as if a mental mist had been miraculously removed from his eyes. In another instant the steed of the young Pawnee was struggling with the torrent.

The utmost strength of the horse was needed to urge the fugitives beyond the flight of arrows that came sailing through the air at the next moment. The cry of Weucha had brought fifty of his comrades to the shore, but fortunately, among them all, there was not one of a rank sufficient to entitle him to the privilege of bearing a fusée. One-half the stream, however, was not passed before the form of Mahtoree himself was seen on its bank, and an ineffectual discharge of fire-arms announced the rage and disappointment of the chief. More than once the trapper had raised his rifle, as if about to try its power on his enemies, but he as often lowered it, without firing. The eyes of the Pawnee warrior glared like those of the cougar, at the sight of so many of the hostile tribe, and he answered the impotent effort of their chief by tossing a hand into the air in contempt, and raising the war-cry of his nation. The challenge was too taunting to be endured. The Tetons dashed into the stream in a body, and the river became dotted with the dark forms of beasts and riders.

There was now a fearful struggle for the friendly bank. As the Dahcotahs advanced with beasts which had not, like that of the Pawnee, expended their strength in former efforts, and as they moved unencumbered by anything but their riders, the speed of the pursuers greatly outstripped that of the fugitives. The trapper, who clearly comprehended

the whole danger of their situation, calmly turned his eyes from the Tetons to his young Indian associate, in order to examine whether the resolution of the latter began to falter as the former lessened the distance between them. Instead of betraying fear, however, or any of that concern which might so readily have been excited by the peculiarity of his risk, the brow of the young warrior contracted to a look which indicated high and deadly hostility.

"Do you greatly value life, friend doctor?" demanded the old man, with a sort of philosophical calmness which made the question doubly appalling to his companion.

"Not for itself," returned the naturalist, sipping some of the water of the river from the hollow of his hand, in order to clear his husky throat—"not for itself, but exceedingly, inasmuch as natural history has so deep a stake in my existence. Therefore——"

"Ay!" resumed the other, who mused too deeply to dissect the ideas of the doctor with his usual sagacity, "'tis in truth the history of natur', and a base and craven feeling it is! Now is life as precious to this young Pawnee as to any governor in the States, and he might save it, or at least stand some chance of saving it, by letting us go down the stream; and yet you see he keeps his faith manfully, and like an Indian warrior. For myself, I am old, and willing to take the fortune that the Lord may see fit to give, nor do I conceit that you are of much benefit to mankind; and it is a crying shame, if not a sin, that so fine a youth as this should lose his scalp for two beings so worthless as ourselves. I am therefore disposed, provided that it shall prove agreeable to you, to tell the lad to make the best of his way, and to leave us to the mercy of the Tetons."

"I repel the proposition, as repugnant to nature and as treason to science!" exclaimed the alarmed naturalist. "Our progress is miraculous; and, as this admirable invention moves with so wonderful a facility, a few more minutes will serve to bring us to land."

The old man regarded him intently for

an instant, and shaking his head, he said :

"Lord, what a thing is fear ! it transforms the creature's of the world and the craft of men, making that which is ugly, seemly in our eyes, and that which is beautiful, unsightly ! Lord, Lord, what a thing is fear ! "

A termination was, however, put to the discussion by the increasing interest of the chase. The horses of the Dahcotahs had by this time gained the middle of the current, and their riders were already filling the air with yells of triumph. At this moment Middleton and Paul, who had led the females to a little thicket, appeared again on the margin of the stream, menacing their enemies with the rifle.

"Mount, mount," shouted the trapper, the instant he beheld them ; "mount and fly, if you value those who lean on you for help ! Mount, and leave us in the hands of the Lord."

"Stoop your head, old trapper," returned the voice of Paul ; "down with you both into your nest. The Teton devil is in your line ; down with your heads, and make room for a Kentucky bullet ! "

The old man turned his head and saw that the eager Mahtoree, who preceded his party some distance, had brought himself nearly in a line with the bark and the bee-hunter, who stood perfectly ready to execute his hostile threat. Bending his body low, the rifle was discharged, and the swift lead whizzed harmlessly past him, on its more distant errand. But the eye of the Teton chief was not less quick and certain than that of his enemy. He threw himself from his horse the moment preceding the report, and sank into the water. The beast snorted with terror and anguish, throwing half his form out of the river in a desperate plunge. Then he was seen drifting away in the torrent, and dyeing the turbid waters with his blood.

The Teton chief soon reappeared on the surface, and, understanding the nature of his loss, he swam with vigorous strokes to the nearest of the young men, who relinquished his steed, as a matter of course, to so renowned a warrior. The incident,

however, created a confusion in the whole of the Dahcotah band, who appeared to await the intention of their leader, before they renewed their efforts to reach the shore. In the meantime the vessel of skin had reached the land, and the fugitives were once more united on the margin of the river.

The savages were now swimming about in indecision, as a flock of pigeons is often seen to hover in confusion after receiving a heavy discharge into its leading column, apparently hesitating on the risk of storming a bank so formidably defended. The well-known precaution of Indian warfare prevailed, and Mahtoree, admonished by his recent adventure, led his warriors back to the shore from which they had come, in order to relieve their beasts, which were already becoming unruly.

"Now, mount you with the tender ones, and ride for yonder hillock," said the trapper ; "beyond it you will find another stream, into which you must enter, and, turning to the sun, follow its bed for a mile, until you reach a high and sandy plain ; there will I meet you. Go ; mount ; this Pawnee youth and I, and my stout friend the physician, who is a desperate warrior, are men enough to keep the bank, seeing that show and not use is all that is needed."

Middleton and Paul saw no use in wasting their breath in remonstrances against this proposal. Glad to know that their rear was to be covered, even in this imperfect manner, they hastily got their horses in motion, and soon disappeared on the required route. Some twenty or thirty minutes succeeded this movement before the Tetons on the opposite shore seemed inclined to enter on any new enterprise. Mahtoree was distinctly visible, in the midst of his warriors, issuing his mandates and betraying his desire for vengeance, by occasionally shaking an arm in the direction of the fugitives ; but no step was taken which appeared to threaten any further act of immediate hostility. At length a yell arose among the savages, which announced the occurrence of some fresh event. Then Ishmael and his sluggish sons were seen in the dis-

tance, and soon the whole of the united force moved down to the very limits of the stream. The squatter proceeded to examine the position of his enemies with his usual coolness, and, as if to try the power of his rifle, he sent a bullet among them with a force sufficient to do execution, even at the distance at which he stood.

"Now let us depart!" exclaimed Obed, endeavoring to catch a furtive glimpse of the lead, which he fancied was whizzing at his very ear; "we have maintained the bank in a gallant manner for a sufficient length of time; quite as much military skill is to be displayed in a retreat as in an advance."

The old man cast a look behind him, and seeing that the equestrians had reached the cover of the hill, he made no objections to the proposal. The remaining horse was given to the doctor, with instructions to pursue the course just taken by Middleton and Paul. When the naturalist was mounted and in full retreat, the trapper and the young Pawnee stole from the spot in such a manner as to leave their enemies for some time in doubt as to their movements. Instead, however, of proceeding across the plain toward the hill, a route on which they must have been in open view, they took a shorter path, covered by the formation of the ground, and intersected the little water-course at the point where Middleton had been directed to leave it, and just in season to join his party. The doctor had used so much diligence in the retreat as to have already overtaken his friends, and of course all the fugitives were again assembled.

The trapper now looked about him for some convenient spot where the whole party might halt, as he expressed it, for some five or six hours.

"Halt!" exclaimed the doctor, when the alarming proposal reached his ears; "venerable hunter, it would seem that, on the contrary, many days should be passed in industrious flight."

Middleton and Paul were both of this opinion, and each in his particular manner expressed as much.

The old man heard them with patience,

but shook his head like one who is unconvinced, and then answered all their arguments in one general and positive reply.

"Why should we fly?" he asked. "Can the legs of mortal men outstrip the speed of horses? Do you think the Teton will lie down and sleep, or will they cross the water and nose for our trail? Thanks be to the Lord, we have washed it well in this stream, and, if we leave the place with discretion and wisdom, we may yet throw them off its track. But a prairie is not a wood. *There* a man may journey long, caring for nothing but the print his moccasin leaves; whereas, on these open plains, a runner placed on yonder hill, for instance, could see far on every side of him, like a hovering hawk looking down on his prey. No, no; night must come and darkness be upon us afore we leave this spot. But listen to the words of the Pawnee; he is a lad of spirit, and, I warrant me, many is the hard race that he has run with the Sioux bands. Does my brother think our trail is long enough?" he demanded, in the Indian tongue.

"Is a Teton a fish, that he can see it in the river?"

"But my young men think we should stretch it until it reaches across the prairie."

"Mahtoree has eyes; he will see it."

"What does my brother counsel?"

The young warrior studied the heavens a moment, and appeared to hesitate. He mused some time with himself and then he replied, like one whose opinion was fixed.

"The Dahcotahs are not asleep," he said; "we must lie in the grass."

"Ah! the lad is of my mind," said the old man, briefly explaining the opinion of his companion to his white friends. Middleton was obliged to acquiesce, and, as it was confessedly dangerous to remain upon their feet, each one set about assisting in the means to be adopted for their security. Inez and Ellen were quickly bestowed beneath the warm and not uncomfortable shelter of the buffalo skins, which formed a thick covering, and tall grass was drawn over the place in such a manner as to

evade any examination from a common eye. Paul and the Pawnee fettered the beasts and cast them to the earth, where, after supplying them with food, they were also left concealed in the fog of the prairie. No time was lost, when these several arrangements were completed, before each of the others sought a place of rest and concealment, and then the plain appeared again deserted to its solitude.

The old man had advised his companions of the absolute necessity of their continuing for hours in this concealment. All their hopes of escape depended on the success of the artifice. If they might elude the cunning of their pursuers by this simple, and therefore less suspected expedient, they could renew their flight as the evening approached, and, by changing their course, the chance of final success would be greatly increased. Influenced by these momentous considerations the whole party lay musing on their situation, until thoughts grew weary, and sleep finally settled on them all, one after another.

The deepest silence had prevailed for hours, when the quick ears of the trapper and the Pawnee were startled by a faint cry of surprise from Inez. Springing to their feet, like men who were about to struggle for their lives, they found the vast plain, the rolling swells, the little hillock, and the scattered thickets covered alike in one white dazzling sheet of snow.

"The Lord have mercy on ye all!" exclaimed the old man, regarding the prospect with a rueful eye. "Now, Pawnee, do I know the reason why you studied the clouds so closely; but it is too late! it is too late! A squirrel would leave his trail on this light coating of the 'arth. Ha! there come the imps to a certainty. Down with ye all, down with ye; your chance is but small, and yet it must not be willfully cast away."

The whole party was instantly concealed again, though many an anxious and stolen glance was directed through the tops of the grass on the movements of their enemies. At the distance of half a mile, the Teton band was seen riding in a circuit, which was gradually contracting itself, and evidently closing upon the very

spot where the fugitives lay. There was but little difficulty in solving the mystery of this movement. The snow had fallen in time to assure them that those they sought were in their rear, and they were now employed, with the unwearied perseverance and patience of Indian warriors, in circling the certain boundaries of their place of concealment.

Each minute added to the jeopardy of the fugitives. Paul and Middleton deliberately prepared their rifles, and as the occupied Mahtoree came, at length, within fifty feet of them, keeping his eyes riveted on the grass through which he rode, they leveled them together and pulled the triggers. The effort was answered by the mere snapping of the locks.

"Enough," said the old man, rising with dignity; "I have cast away the priming; for certain death would follow your rashness. Now let us meet our fates like men. Cringing and complaining find no favor in Indian eyes."

His appearance was greeted by a yell that spread far and wide over the plain, and in a moment a hundred savages were seen riding madly to the spot. Mahtoree received his prisoners with great self-restraint, though a single gleam of fierce joy broke through his clouded brow, and the heart of Middleton grew cold as he caught the expression of that eye which the chief turned on the nearly insensible but still lovely Inez.

The exultation of receiving the white captives was so great as for a time to throw the dark and immovable form of their young Indian companion entirely out of view. He stood apart, disdaining to turn an eye on his enemies, as motionless as if he were frozen in that attitude of dignity and composure. But when a little time had passed even this secondary object attracted the attention of the Teton. Then it was that the trapper first learned, by the shouts of triumph and long-drawn yell of delight, which burst at once from a hundred throats, as well as by the terrible name which filled the air, that his youthful friend was no other than that redoubtable and hitherto invincible warrior, Hard-Heart.

CHAPTER XXV.

"What, are ancient Pistol and you friends yet?"—
SHAKESPEARE.

THE curtain of our imperfect drama must fall to rise upon another scene. The time is advanced several days, during which very material changes had occurred in the situation of the actors. The hour is noon, and the place an elevated plain, that rose, at no great distance from the water, somewhat abruptly from a fertile bottom which stretched along the margin of one of the numberless water-courses of that region. The river took its rise near the base of the Rocky Mountains, and after washing a vast extent of plain it mingled its waters with a still larger stream, to become finally lost in the turbid current of the Missouri.

The landscape was changed materially for the better; though the hand which had impressed so much of the desert on the surrounding region had laid a portion of its power on this spot. The appearance of vegetation was, however, less discouraging than in the more sterile wastes of the rolling prairies. Clusters of trees were scattered in greater profusion, and a long outline of ragged forest marked the northern boundary of the view. Here and there on the bottom were to be seen the evidences of a hasty and imperfect culture of such indigenous vegetables as were of a quick growth, and which were known to flourish without the aid of art in deep and alluvial soils.

On the very edge of what might be called the table-land, were pitched the hundred lodges of a horde of wandering Sioux. Their light tenements were arranged without the least attention to order. Proximity to the water seemed to be the only consideration which had been consulted in their disposition, nor had even this important convenience been always regarded. While most of the lodges stood along the brow of the plain, many were to be seen at greater distances, occupying such places as had first pleased the capricious eyes of their untutored owners. The encampment was not military nor in the slightest degree protected from sur-

prise by its position or defenses. It was open on every side, and on every side as accessible as any other point in those wastes, if the imperfect and natural obstruction offered by the river be excepted. In short, the place bore the appearance of having been tenanted longer than its occupants had originally intended, while it was not wanting in the signs of readiness for a hasty, or even a compelled, departure.

This was the temporary encampment of that portion of his people who had long been hunting under the direction of Mah-toree, on those grounds which separated the stationary abodes of his nation from those of the warlike tribes of the Pawnees. The lodges were tents of skin, high, conical, and of the most simple and primitive construction. The shield, the quiver, the lance, and the bow of its master were to be seen suspended from a light post before the opening or door of each habitation. The different domestic implements of his one, two, or three wives, as the brave was of greater or lesser renown, were carelessly thrown at its side, and here and there the round, full, patient countenance of an infant might be found peeping from its comfortable wrappers of bark, as, suspended by a deer-skin thong from the same post, it rocked in the passing air. Children of a larger growth were tumbling over each other in piles, the males, even at that early age, making themselves distinguished for that species of domination which in after-life was to mark the vast distinction between the sexes. Youths were in the bottom, essaying their juvenile powers in curbing the wild steeds of their fathers, while here and there a truant girl was to be seen stealing from her labors to admire their fierce and impatient daring.

Thus far the picture was the daily exhibition of an encampment confident in its security. But immediately in front of the lodges was a gathering that seemed to forebode some movements of more than usual interest. A few of the withered and remorseless crones of the band were clustering together in readiness to lend their fell voices, if needed, to aid in exciting their descendants to an exhibition which their depraved tastes coveted, as the luxurious

Roman dame witnessed the struggles and the agony of the gladiator. The men were subdivided into groups, assorted according to the deeds and reputations of the several individuals of whom they were composed.

They who were of that equivocal age which admitted them to the hunts, while their discretion was still too doubtful to permit them to be trusted on the war-path, hung around the skirts of the whole, catching from the fierce models before them that gravity of demeanor and restraint of manner which in time was to become so deeply ingrafted in their own characters. A few of the still older class, and who had heard the whoop in anger, were a little more presuming, pressing higher to the chiefs, though far from presuming to mingle in their councils, sufficiently distinguished by being permitted to catch the wisdom which fell from lips so venerated. The ordinary warriors of the band were still less diffident, not hesitating to mingle among the chiefs of lessér note, though far from assuming the right to dispute the sentiments of any established brave, or to call in question the prudence of measures that were recommended by the more gifted counselors of the nation.

Among the chiefs themselves there was a singular compound of exterior. They were divided into two classes; those who were mainly indebted for their influence to physical causes and to deeds in arms, and those who had become distinguished rather for their wisdom than for their services in the field. The former was by far the most numerous and the most important class. They were men of stature and mien, whose stern countenances were rendered doubly imposing by those evidences of their valor which had been roughly traced on their lineaments by the hands of their enemies. That class which had gained its influence by a moral ascendancy was extremely limited. They were uniformly to be distinguished by the quick and lively expression of their eyes, by the air of distrust that marked their movements, and occasionally by the vehemence of their utterance in those sudden outbursts of the mind by

which their present consultations were from time to time distinguished.

In the very center of a ring formed by these chosen counselors was to be seen the person of the disquieted but seemingly calm Mahtoree. There was a conjunction of all the several qualities of the others in his person and character. Mind as well as matter had contributed to establish his authority. His scars were as numerous and deep as those of the whitest head in his nation; his limbs were in their greatest vigor; his courage at its fullest height. Endowed with this rare combination of moral and physical influence, the keenest eye in all that assembly was wont to lower before his threatening glance. Courage and cunning had established his ascendancy, and it had been rendered in some degree sacred by time. He knew so well how to unite the powers of reason and force, that, in a state of society which admitted of a greater display of his energies, the Teton would in all probability have been both a conqueror and a despot.

A little apart from the gathering of the band was to be seen a set of beings of an entirely different origin. Taller and far more muscular in their persons, the lingering vestiges of their Saxon and Norman ancestry were yet to be found beneath the swarthy complexions which had been bestowed by an American sun. It would have been a curious investigation for one skilled in such an inquiry to have traced those points of difference by which the offspring of the most western European was still to be distinguished from the descendant of the most remote Asiatic, now that the two, in the revolutions of the world, were approximating in their habits, their residence, and not a little in their characters. The group of whom we write was composed of the family of the squatter. They stood indolent, lounging, and inert, as usual, when no immediate demand was made on their dormant energies, clustered in front of some four or five habitations of skin, for which they were indebted to the hospitality of their Teton allies. The terms of their unexpected confederation were sufficiently explained by the presence of the horses and domestic cattle that

were quietly grazing on the bottom beneath, under the jealous eyes of the spirited Hetty.

Their wagons were drawn about the lodges in a sort of irregular barrier, which at once manifested that their confidence was not entirely restored, while on the other hand, their policy or indolence prevented any very positive exhibition of distrust. There was a singular union of passive enjoyment and of dull curiosity slumbering in every dull countenance, as each of the party stood leaning on his rifle, regarding the movements of the Sioux conference. Still no sign of expectation or interest escaped from the youngest among them, the whole appearing to emulate the most phlegmatic of their savage allies in an exhibition of patience. They rarely spoke; and, when they did, it was in some short and contemptuous remark, which served to put the physical superiority of a white man and that of an Indian in a sufficiently striking point of view. In short, the family of Ishmael appeared now to be in the plenitude of enjoyment which depended on inactivity, but which was not entirely free from certain confused glimmerings of a perspective in which their security stood in some little danger of a rude interruption from Teton treachery. Abiram alone formed a solitary exception to this state of equivocal repose.

After a life passed in the commission of a thousand mean and insignificant villainies, the mind of the kidnapper had become hardy enough to attempt the desperate adventure which has been laid before the reader in the course of the narrative. His influence over the bolder but less active spirit of Ishmael was far from great; and had not the latter been suddenly expelled from a fertile bottom, of which he had taken possession with intent to keep it without much deference to the forms of law, he would never have succeeded in enlisting the husband of his sister in an enterprise that required so much decision and forethought. Their original success and subsequent disappointment have been seen; and Abiram now sat apart plotting the means by which he

might secure to himself the advantages of his undertaking, which he perceived were each moment becoming more uncertain, through the open admiration of Mahtoree for the innocent subject of his villainy. We shall leave him to his vacillating and confused expedients, in order to pass to the description of certain other personages in the drama.

There was still another corner of the picture that was occupied. On a little bank at the extreme right of the encampment, lay the forms of Middleton and Paul. Their limbs were painfully bound with thongs cut from the skin of a bison, while, by a sort of refinement in cruelty, they were so placed that each could see a reflection of his own misery in the case of his neighbor. Within a dozen yards of them a post was set firmly in the ground, and against it was bound the light and Apollo-like person of Hard-Heart. Between the two stood the trapper, deprived of his rifle, his pouch, and his horn, but otherwise left in a sort of contemptuous liberty. Some five or six young warriors, however, with quivers at their backs and long tough bows dangling from their shoulders, who stood with grave watchfulness at no great distance from the spot, sufficiently proclaimed how fruitless any attempt to escape, on the part of one so aged and so feeble, might prove. Unlike the other spectators of the important conference, these individuals were engaged in a discourse that for them contained an interest of its own.

"Captain," said the bee-hunter, with an expression of comical concern that no misfortune could depress in one of his buoyant feelings, "do you really find that accursed strap of untanned leather cutting into your shoulder, or is it only the tickling in my own arm that I feel?"

"When the spirit suffers so deeply, the body is insensible to pain," returned the more refined, though scarcely so spirited Middleton; "would to Heaven that some of my trusty artillerists might fall upon this accursed encampment!"

"You might as well wish that these Teton lodges were so many hives of hornets, and that the insects would come

forth and battle with yonder tribe of half naked savages." Then chuckling with his own conceit, the bee-hunter turned away from his companion, and sought a momentary relief from his misery by imagining that so wild an idea might be realized, and fancying the manner in which the attack would upset even the well-established patience of an Indian.

Middleton was glad to be silent; but the old man, who had listened to their words, drew a little nigher, and continued the discourse.

"Here is likely to be a merciless and a hellish business!" he said, shaking his head in a manner to prove that even his experience was at a loss for a remedy in so trying a dilemma. "Our Pawnee friend is already staked for the torture, and I well know, by the eye and the countenance of the great Sioux, that he is leading on the temper of his people to further enormities."

"Harkee, old trapper," said Paul, writhing in his bonds to catch a glimpse of the other's melancholy face, "you are skilled in Indian tongues and know somewhat of Indian deviltries. Go you to the council, and tell their chiefs in my name, that is to say, in the name of Paul Hover, of the State of Kentucky, that provided they will guarantee the safe return of one Ellen Wade into the States, they are welcome to take his scalp when and in such manner as best suits their amusements; or, if so be they will not trade on these conditions, you may throw in an hour or two of torture beforehand in order to sweeten the bargain to their damnable appetites."

"Ah! lad, it is little they would hearken to such an offer, knowing, as they do, that you are already like a bear in a trap, as little able to fight as to fly. But be not downhearted, for the color of a white man is sometimes his death-warrant among these far tribes of savages, and sometimes his shield. Though they love us not, cunning often ties their hands. Could the red nations work their will, trees would shortly be growing again on the plowed fields of America; and woods would be whitened with Christian bones. No one can

doubt that, who knows the quality of the love which a red-skin bears a pale-face; but they have counted our numbers until their memories fail them, and they are not without their policy. Therefore is our fate unsettled; but I fear me there is small hope left for the Pawnee!"

As the old man concluded he walked slowly toward the subject of his latter observation, taking his post at no great distance from his side. Here he stood, observing such a silence and mien as became him to manifest, to a chief so renowned and so situated as his captive associate. But the eye of Hard-Heart was fastened on the distance, and his whole air was that of one whose thoughts were entirely removed from the present scene.

"The Sioux are in council on my brother," the trapper at length observed, when he found he could only attract the other's attention by speaking.

The young partisan turned his head with a calm smile as he answered—

"They are counting the scalps over the lodge of Hard-Heart!"

"No doubt, no doubt; their tempers begin to mount, as they remember the number of Tetons you have struck, and better would it be for you now had more of your days been spent in chasing the deer, and fewer on the war-path. Then some childless mother of this tribe might take you in the place of her lost son, and your time would be filled in peace."

"Does my father think that a warrior can ever die? The Master of Life does not open his hand to take away his gifts again. When he wants his young men he calls them, and they go. But the red-skin that he has once breathed on lives forever."

"Ay, this is a more comfortable and a more humble faith than that which yonder heartless Teton harbors! There is something in these Loups which opens my inmost heart to them; they seem to have the courage, ay, and the honesty, too, of the Delawares of the hills. And this lad—it is wonderful, it is very wonderful; but the age, and the eye, and the limbs, are as if they might have been brothers! Tell me, Pawnee, have you ever in your

traditions heard of a mighty people who once lived on the shores of the Salt-lake, hard by the rising sun?"

"The earth is white by people of the color of my father."

"Nay, nay, I speak not now of any strollers who have crept into the land to rob the lawful owners of their birthright, but of a people who are, or rather were, what with nature and what with paint, red as the berry on the bush."

"I have heard the old men say that there were bands who hid themselves in the woods under the rising sun, because they dared not come upon the open prairies to fight."

"Do not your traditions tell you of the greatest, the bravest, and the wisest nations of red-skins that the Wahcondah has ever breathed upon?"

Hard-Heart raised his head with a loftiness and dignity that even his bonds could not repress as he answered:

"Has age blinded my father; or does he see so many Sioux that he believes there are no longer any Pawnees?"

"Ah! such is mortal vanity and pride!" exclaimed the disappointed old man in English; "Natur' is as strong in a red-skin as in the bosom of a man of white gifts. Now would a Delaware conceit himself far mightier than a Pawnee, just as a Pawnee boasts himself to be of the princes of the'arth. And so it was atween the Frenchers of the Canadas and the red-coated English, that the king did use to send into the States, when States they were not, but outcrying and petitioning provinces; they fou't and they fou't, and what marvelous boastings did they give forth to the world of their own valor and victories, while both parties forgot to name the humble soldier of the land who did the real service, but who, as he was not privileged then to smoke at the great council-fire of his nation, seldom heard of his deeds, after they were once bravely done."

When the old man had thus given vent to the nearly dormant but far from extinct military pride that had so unconsciously led him into the very error he deprecated, his eye, which had begun to quicken and

glimmer with some of the ardor of his youth, softened and turned its anxious look on the devoted captive, whose countenance was also restored to its former cold look of abstraction and thought.

"Young warrior," he continued, in a voice that was growing tremulous, "I have never been father or brother. The Wahcondah made me to live alone. He never tied my heart to house or field, by the cords with which the men of my race are bound to their lodges; if he had, I should not have journeyed so far, and seen so much. But I have tarried long among a people who lived in those woods you mention, and much reason did I find to imitate their courage and love their honesty. The Master of Life has made us all, Pawnee, with a feeling for our kind. I never was a father, but well do I know what is the love of one. You are like a lad I valued, and I had even begun to fancy that some of his blood might be in your veins. But what matters that? You are a true man, as I know by the way in which you keep your faith; and honesty is a gift too rare to be forgotten. My heart yearns to you, boy, and gladly would I do you good."

The youthful warrior listened to the words which came from the lips of the other with a force and simplicity that established their truth, and he bowed his head on his naked bosom, in testimony of the respect with which he met the proffer. Then lifting his dark eye to the level of the view, he seemed to be again considering of things removed from every personal consideration. The trapper, who well knew how high the pride of a warrior would sustain him, in those moments he believed to be his last, awaited the pleasure of his young friend with a meekness and patience that he had acquired by his association with that remarkable race. At length the gaze of the Pawnee began to waver; and then quick flashing glances were turned from the countenance of the old man to the air, and from the air to his deeply marked lineaments again, as if the spirit which governed their movements was beginning to be troubled.

"Father," the young brave finally an-

swered, in a voice of confidence and kindness, "I have heard your words. They have gone in at my ears, and are now within me. The white-headed Long-knife has no son; the Hard-Heart of the Pawnees is young, but he is already the oldest of his family. He found the bones of his father on the hunting-ground of the Osages, and he has sent them to the prairies of the Good Spirits. No doubt the great chief, his father, has seen them, and knows what is a part of himself. But the Wahcondah will soon call to us both; you, because you have seen all that is to be seen in this country; and Hard-Heart, because he has need of a warrior who is young. There is no time for the Pawnee to show the pale-face the duty that a son owes to his father."

"Old as I am, and miserable and helpless as I now stand, to what I once was, I may live to see the sun go down in the prairie. Does my son expect to do as much?"

"The Tetons are counting the scalps on my lodge!" returned the young chief, with a smile whose melancholy was singularly illuminated by a gleam of triumph.

"And they find them many—too many for the safety of its owner, while he is in their revengeful hands. My son is not a woman, and he looks on the path he is about to travel with a steady eye. Has he nothing to whisper in the ears of his people before he starts? These legs are old, but they may yet carry me to the forks of the Loup river."

"Tell them that Hard-Heart has tied a knot in his wampum for every Teton!" burst from the lips of the captive, with that vehemence with which sudden passion is known to break through the barriers of artificial restraint; "if he meets one of them all in the prairies of the Master of Life, his heart will become Sioux!"

"Ah! that feeling would be a dangerous companion for a man with white gifts to start with on so solemn a journey," muttered the old man in English. "This is not what the good Moravians said to the councils of the Delawares, nor what is so often preached to the white skins in the settlements, though, to the shame of the

color be it said, it is so little heeded. Pawnee, I love you; but, being a Christian man, I cannot be the runner to bear such a message."

"If my father is afraid the Tetons will hear him, let him whisper it softly to our old men."

"As for fear, young warrior, it is no more the shame of a pale-face than of a red-skin. The Wahcondah teaches us to love the life he gives; but it is as men love their hunts, and their dogs and their carabines, and not with the doting that a mother looks upon her infant. The Master of Life will not have to speak aloud twice when he calls my name. I am as ready to answer to it now as I shall be to-morrow, or at any time it may please his mighty will. But what is a warrior without his traditions? Mine forbid me to carry your words."

The chief made a dignified motion of assent, and here there was great danger that those feelings of confidence which had been so singularly awakened would as suddenly subside. But the heart of the old man had been too sensibly touched, through long dormant but still living recollections, to break off the communication so rudely. He pondered for a minute and then, bending his look wistfully on his young associate, again continued—

"Each warrior must be judged by his gifts. I have told my son what I cannot, but let him open his ears to what I can do. An elk shall not measure the prairie much swifter than these old legs, if the Pawnee will give me a message that a white man may bear."

"Let the pale-face listen," returned the other, after hesitating a single instant longer, under a lingering sensation of his former disappointment. "He will stay here till the Sioux have done counting the scalps of their dead warriors. He will wait until they have tried to cover the heads of eighteen Tetons with the skin of one Pawnee; he will open his eyes wide, that he may see the place where they bury the bones of a warrior."

"All this will I, and may I, do, noble boy."

"He will mark the spot, that he may know it."

"No fear, no fear that I shall forget the place," interrupted the other, whose fortitude began to give way under so trying an exhibition of calmness and resignation.

"Then I know that my father will go to my people. His head is gray, and I know that his words will not be blown away with the smoke. Let him get on my lodge, and call the name of Hard-Heart aloud. No Pawnee will be deaf. Then let my father ask for the colt that has never been ridden, but which is sleeker than the buck, and swifter than the elk."

"I understand you, boy, I understand you," interrupted the attentive old man, "and what you say shall be done, ay, and well done, too, or I'm but little skilled in the wishes of a dying Indian."

"And when my young men have given my father the halter of that colt, he will lead him by a crooked path to the grave of Hard-Heart?"

"Will I! ay, that I will, brave youth, though the winter covers these plains in banks of snow, and the sun is hidden as much by day as by night. To the head of the holy spot will I lead the beast, and place him with his eyes looking toward the setting sun."

"And my father will speak to him, and tell him that the master who has fed him since he was foaled has now need of him."

"That, too, will I do; though the Lord he knows that I shall hold discourse with a horse, not with any vain conceit that my words will be understood, but only to satisfy the cravings of Indian superstition—Hector, my pup, what think *you*, dog, of talking to a horse?"

"Let the gray-beard speak to him with the tongue of a Pawnee," interrupted the young victim, perceiving that his companion had used an unknown language for the preceding speech.

"My son's will shall be done. And with these old hands, which I had hoped had nearly done with bloodshed, whether it be of man or beast, will I slay the animal on your grave!"

"It is good," returned the other, a gleam of satisfaction flitting across his features. "Hard-Heart will ride his horse

to the blessed prairies, and he will come before the Master of Life like a chief!"

The sudden and striking change which instantly occurred in the countenance of the Indian, caused the trapper to look aside, when he perceived that the conference of the Sioux had ended, and that Mahtoree, attended by one or two of the principal warriors, was deliberately approaching his intended victim.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I am not prone to weeping as our sex
Commonly are."

—But I have that honorable
Grief, lodged here, which burns worse than
Tears drown."

—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN within twenty feet of the prisoners, the Tetons stopped, and their leader made a sign to the old man to draw nigh. The trapper obeyed, quitting the young Pawnee with a significant look, which was received, as it was meant, for an additional pledge that he would never forget his promise. So soon as Mahtoree found that the other had stopped within reach of him, he stretched forth his arm, and laying a hand upon the shoulder of the attentive old man, he stood regarding him a minute, with eyes that seemed willing to penetrate the recesses of his most secret thoughts.

"Is a pale-face always made with two tongues?" he demanded, when he found that, as usual with the subject of this examination, he was as little intimidated by his present frown, as moved by any apprehensions of the future.

"Honesty lies deeper than the skin."

"It is so. Now let my father hear me. Mahtoree has but one tongue, the gray-head has many. They may be all straight and none of them forked. A Sioux is no more than a Sioux, but a pale-face is everything! He can talk to the Pawnee, and the Konza, and the Omahaw, and he can talk to his own people."

"Ay, there are linguisters in the settlements that can do still more. But what

profits it all? The Master of Life has an ear for every language!"

"The gray-head has done wrong. He has said one thing when he meant another. He has looked before him with his eyes, and behind him with his mind. He has ridden the horse of a Sioux too hard; he has been the friend of a Pawnee, and the enemy of my people."

"Teton, I am your prisoner. Though my words are white, they will not complain. Act your will."

"No. Mahtoree will not make a white hair red. My father is free. The prairie is open on every side of him. But before the gray-head turns his back on the Sioux, let him look well at them, that he may tell his own chief how great is a Dahcotah!"

"I am not in a hurry to go on my path. You see a man with a white head, and no woman, Teton; therefore shall I not run myself out of breath to tell the nations of the prairies what the Sioux are doing."

"It is good. My father has smoked with the chiefs at many councils," returned Mahtoree, who now thought himself sufficiently sure of the other's favor to go more directly to his object. "Mahtoree will speak with the tongue of his very dear friend and father. A young pale-face will listen when an old man of that nation opens his mouth. Go; my father will make what a poor Indian says fit for a white ear."

"Speak aloud!" said the trapper, who readily understood the metaphorical manner in which the Teton expressed a desire that he should become an interpreter of his words into the English language; "speak; my young men listen.—Now, captain, and you too, friend bee-hunter, prepare yourselves to meet the deviltries of this savage with the stout hearts of white warriors. If you find yourselves giving way under his threats, just turn your eyes on that noble-looking Pawnee, whose time is measured with a hand as niggardly as that with which a trader in the towns gives forth the fruits of the Lord, inch by inch, in order to satisfy his covetousness. A single look at the boy will set you both up in resolution."

"My brother has turned his eyes on the wrong path," interrupted Mahtoree, with a complacency that betrayed how unwilling he was to offend his intended interpreter.

"The Dahcotah will speak to my young men?"

"After he has sung in the ear of the flower of the pale-faces."

"The Lord forgive the desperate villain!" exclaimed the old man, in English. "There are none so tender, or so young, or so innocent, as to escape his ravenous wishes. But hard words and cold looks will profit nothing; therefore it will be wise to speak to him fair.—Let Mahtoree open his mouth."

"Would my father cry out that the women and children should hear the wisdom of chiefs? We will go into the lodge and whisper."

As the Teton ended, he pointed significantly toward a tent, vividly emblazoned with the history of one of his own boldest and most commended exploits, and which stood a little apart from the rest, as if to denote it was the residence of some privileged individual of the band. The shield and quiver at its entrance were richer than common, and the high distinction of a fusée attested the importance of its proprietor. In every other particular it was rather distinguished by signs of poverty than of wealth. The domestic utensils were fewer in number and simpler in their forms than those to be seen about the openings of the meanest lodges, nor was there a single one of those highly prized articles of civilized life, which were occasionally bought of the traders, in bargains that bore so hard on the ignorant natives. All these had been bestowed, as they had been acquired, by the generous chief, on his subordinates, to purchase an influence that might render him the master of their lives and persons; a species of wealth that was certainly more noble in itself, and far dearer to his ambition.

The old man well knew this to be the lodge of Mahtoree, and, in obedience to the sign of the chief, he held his way toward it with slow and reluctant steps. But there were others present who were

equally interested in the approaching conference, whose apprehensions were not to be so easily suppressed. The watchful eyes and jealous ears of Middleton had taught him enough to fill his soul with terrible forebodings. With an incredible effort he succeeded in gaining his feet, and called aloud to the retiring trapper :

"I conjure you, old man, if the love you bore my parents was more than words, or if the love you bear your God is that of a Christian man, utter not a syllable that may wound the ear of that innocent——"

Exhausted in spirit and fettered in limbs, he fell like an animated log to the earth, where he lay like one dead.

Paul had, however, caught the clew, and completed the exhortation in his peculiar manner :

"Harkee, old trapper," he shouted, vainly endeavoring at the same time to make a gesture of defiance with his hand ; "if you ar' about to play the interpreter, speak such words to the ears of that damnable savage as becomes a white man to use and a heathen to hear. Tell him, from me, that if he does or says the thing that is uncivil to the girl called Nelly Wade, that I'll curse him with my dying breath ; that I'll pray for all good Christians in Kentucky to curse him ; sitting and standing ; eating and drinking ; fighting, praying, or at horse-races ; in-doors and out-doors ; in summer or winter, or in the month of March ; in short, I'll—ay, it ar' a fact morally true—I'll haunt him, if the ghost of a pale-face can contrive to lift itself from the grave made by the hands of a red-skin !"

Having thus ventured the most terrible denunciations he could devise, and the one which, in the eyes of the honest bee-hunter, there seemed the greatest likelihood of his being able to put in execution, he was obliged to await the fruits of his threat with that resignation which would be apt to govern a Western borderman who, in addition to the prospects just named, had the advantage of contemplating them in fetters and bondage. We shall not detain the narrative to relate the quaint morals with which he next endeavored to cheer the drooping spirits of

his more sensitive companion, or the occasional pity and peculiar benedictions that he pronounced on all the bands of the Dahcotahs, commencing with those that he accused of stealing or murdering, on the banks of the distant Mississippi, and concluding, in terms of suitable energy, with the Teton tribe. The latter more than once received from his lips curses as sententious and as complicated as that celebrated anathema of the Church, for a knowledge of which most unlettered Protestants are indebted to the pious researches of the worthy Tristram Shandy. But as Middleton recovered from his exhaustion, he was fain to appease the boisterous temper of his associate, by admonishing him of the uselessness of such denunciations, and of the possibility of their hastening the very evil he deprecated, by irritating the resentments of a race who were sufficiently fierce and lawless, even in their most pacific moods.

In the meantime the trapper and the Sioux chief pursued their way to the lodge. The former had watched with painful interest the expression of Mahtoree's eye, while the words of Middleton and Paul were pursuing their footsteps ; but the mien of the Indian was far too much restrained and self-guarded to permit the smallest of his emotions to escape through any of those ordinary outlets by which the condition of the human volcano is commonly betrayed. His look was fastened on the little habitation they approached ; and, for the moment, his thoughts appeared to brood alone on the purposes of this extraordinary visit.

The appearance of the interior of the lodge corresponded with its exterior. It was larger than most of the others, more finished in its form, and finer in its materials ; but there its superiority ceased. Nothing could be more simple and republican than the form of living that the ambitious and powerful Teton chose to exhibit to the eyes of his people. A choice collection of weapons for the chase, and three or four medals bestowed by the traders and political agents of the Canadas as a homage to, or rather an acknowledgment of, his rank, with a few of the most indispensable arti-

cles of personal accommodation, composed its furniture. It abounded in neither venison nor the wild-beef of the prairies; its crafty owner having well understood that the liberality of a single individual would be abundantly rewarded by the daily contributions of a band. Although as pre-eminent in the chase as in war, a deer or a buffalo was never seen to enter whole into his lodge. In return, an animal was rarely brought into the encampment that did not contribute to support the family of Mahtoree. But the policy of the chief seldom permitted more to remain than sufficed for the wants of the day, perfectly sure that all must suffer before hunger, the bane of savage life, could lay its fell fangs on so important a victim.

Immediately beneath the favorite bow of the chief, and encircled in a sort of magical ring of spears, shields, lances, and arrows, all of which had in their time done good service, was suspended the mysterious and sacred medicine bag. It was highly wrought in wampum, and profusely ornamented with beads and porcupines' quills, after the most cunning devices of Indian ingenuity. The particular freedom of Mahtoree's religious creed has been more than once intimated, and, by a singular species of contradiction, he appeared to have lavished his attentions on this emblem of a supernatural agency in a degree that was precisely inverse to his faith. It was merely the manner in which the Sioux imitated the well-known expedient of the Pharisees, "in order that they might be seen of men."

The tent had not, however, been entered by its owner since his return from the recent expedition. As the reader has already anticipated, it had been made the prison of Inez and Ellen. The bride of Middleton was seated on a simple couch of sweet-scented herbs covered with skins. She had already suffered so much, and witnessed so many wild and unlooked for events, within the short space of her captivity, that every additional misfortune fell with a diminished force on her seemingly devoted head. Her cheeks were bloodless, her dark and usually animated eye was contracted in an expression of

settled concern, and her form appeared shrinking and sensitive, nearly to extinction. But, in the midst of these evidences of natural weakness there were at times such an air of pious resignation, such gleams of meek but holy hope lighting her countenance, as might well have rendered it a question whether the hapless captive was most a subject of pity or of admiration. All the precepts of Father Ignatius were riveted in her faithful memory, and not a few of his pious visions were floating before her imagination. Sustained by no sacred resolutions, the mild, the patient, and the confiding girl was bowing her head to this new stroke of Providence, with the same sort of meekness as she would have submitted to any other prescribed penitence for her sins, though Nature, at moments, warred powerfully with so compelled a humility.

On the other hand, Ellen had exhibited far more of the woman, and consequently of the passions of the world. She had wept until her eyes were swollen and red. Her cheeks were flushed and angry, and her whole mien was distinguished by an air of spirit and resentment that was not a little, however, qualified by apprehensions for the future. In short, there was that about the eye and step of the betrothed of Paul which gave a warranty that, should happier times arrive, and the constancy of the bee-hunter finally meet with its reward, he would possess a partner every way worthy to cope with his own thoughtless and buoyant temperament.

There was still another and a third figure in that little knot of females. It was the youngest, the most highly gifted, and, until now, the most favored of the wives of the Teton. Her charms had not been without the most powerful attraction in the eyes of her husband, until they had so unexpectedly opened on the surpassing loveliness of a woman of the pale-faces. From that hapless moment the graces, the attachment, the fidelity of the young Indian had lost their power to please. Still the complexion of Tachechana, though less dazzling than that of her rival, was, for her race, clear and healthy.

Her hazel eye had the sweetness and playfulness of the antelope's; her voice was soft and joyous as the song of the wren, and her happy laugh was the very melody of the forest. Of all the Sioux girls, Tachechana (or the fawn) was the lightest-hearted and the most envied. Her father had been a distinguished brave, and her brothers had already left their bones in a distant and dreary war-path. Numberless were the warriors who had sent presents to the lodge of her parents, but none of them were listened to until a messenger from the great Mahtoree had come. She was his third wife, it is true, but she was confessedly the most favored of them all. Their union had existed but two short seasons, and its fruits now lay sleeping at her feet, wrapped in the customary ligatures of skin and bark, which form the swaddlings of an Indian infant.

At the moment when Mahtoree and the trapper arrived at the opening of the lodge the young Sioux wife was seated on a simple stool, turning her soft eyes with looks that varied, like her emotions, with love and wonder, from the unconscious child to those rare beings who had filled her youthful and uninstructed mind with such admiration and astonishment. Though Inez and Ellen had passed an entire day in her sight, it seemed as if the longings of her curiosity were increasing with each new gaze. She regarded them as beings of an entirely different nature and condition from the females of the prairie. Even the mystery of their complicated attire had its secret influence on her simple mind, though it was the grace and charms of sex, to which nature has made every people so sensible, that most attracted her admiration. But while her ingenuous disposition freely admitted the superiority of the strangers over the less brilliant attractions of the Dahcotah maidens, she had seen no reason to deprecate their advantages. The visit that she was now about to receive was the first which her husband had made to the tent since his return from the recent inroad, and he was ever present to her thoughts as a successful warrior, who was not ashamed in the moments of inaction

to admit the softer feelings of a father and a husband.

We have everywhere endeavored to show that, while Mahtoree was in all essentials a warrior of the prairies, he was much in advance of his people in those acquirements which announce the dawnings of civilization. He had held frequent communion with the traders and troops of the Canadas, and the intercourse had unsettled many of those wild opinions which were his birthright, without perhaps substituting any others of a nature sufficiently definite to be profitable. His reasoning was rather subtle than true, and his philosophy far more audacious than profound. Like thousands of more enlightened beings who fancy they are able to go through the trials of human existence without any other support than their own resolutions, his morals were accommodating and his motives selfish. These several characteristics will be understood always with reference to the situation of the Indian, though little apology is needed for finding resemblances between men who essentially possess the same nature, however it may be modified by circumstances.

Notwithstanding the presence of Inez and Ellen, the entrance of the Teton warrior into the lodge of his favorite wife was made with the tread and mien of a master. The step of his moccasin was noiseless, but the rattling of his bracelets and of the silver ornaments of his leggings, sufficed to announce his approach as he pushed aside the skin covering of the opening of the tent, and stood in the presence of its inmates. A faint cry of pleasure burst from the lips of Tachechana in the suddenness of her surprise, but the emotion was instantly suppressed in that subdued demeanor which should characterize a matron of her tribe. Instead of returning the stolen glance of his youthful and secretly rejoicing wife, Mahtoree moved to the couch occupied by his prisoners, and placed himself in the haughty, upright attitude of an Indian chief before their eyes. The old man had glided past him and already taken a position suited to the office he had been commanded to fill.

Surprise kept the females silent and nearly breathless. Though accustomed to the sight of savage warriors in the horrid panoply of their terrible profession, there was something so startling in the entrance, and so audacious in the inexplicable look of their conqueror that the eyes of both sank to the earth under a feeling of terror and embarrassment. Then Inez recovered herself and, addressing the trapper, she demanded with the dignity of an offended gentlewoman, though with her accustomed grace, to what circumstance they owed this extraordinary and unexpected visit. The old man hesitated; but, clearing his throat like one who was about to make an effort to which he was little used, he ventured on the following reply—

"Lady," he said, "a savage is a savage, and you are not to look for the uses and formalities of the settlements on a bleak and windy prairie. As these Indians would say, fashions and courtesies are things so light that they would blow away. As for myself, though a man of the forest, I have seen the ways of the great in my time, and I am not to learn that they differ from the ways of the lowly. I was long a serving-man in my youth; not one of your beck-and-nod runners about a household, but a man that went through the servitude of the forest with his officer, and well do I know in what manner to approach the wife of a captain. Now, had I the ordering of this visit, I would first have hemmed aloud at the door in order that you might hear that strangers were coming, and then I—"

"The manner is indifferent," interrupted Inez, too anxious to await the prolix explanations of the old man; "why is this visit made?"

"Therein shall the savage speak for himself. The daughters of the pale-faces wish to know why the great Teton has come into his lodge?"

Mahtoree regarded his interrogator with a surprise which showed how extraordinary he deemed the question. Then placing himself in a posture of condescension, after a moment's delay, he answered—

"Sing in the ears of the dark-eye. Tell her the lodge of Mahtoree is very large, and that it is not full. She shall find room in it, and none shall be greater than she. Tell the light hair that she too may stop in the lodge of a brave and eat of his venison. Mahtoree is a great chief. His hand is never shut."

"Teton," returned the trapper, shaking his head in evidence of the strong disapprobation with which he heard this language, "the tongue of a red-skin must be colored white before it can make music in the ears of a pale-face. Should your words be spoken, my daughters would shut their ears, and Mahtoree would seem a trader in their eyes. Now, listen to what comes from a gray head, and then speak accordingly. My people is a mighty people. The sun rises on their eastern and sets on their western border. The land is filled with bright-eyed and laughing girls, like these you see—ay, Teton, I tell no lie," observing his auditor to start with an air of distrust—"bright-eyed and pleasant to behold as these before you."

"Has my father a hundred wives?" interrupted the savage, laying his finger on the shoulder of the trapper, with a look of curious interest in the reply.

"No, Dahcotah. The Master of Life has said to me, Live alone; your lodge shall be the forest; the roof of your wigwam, the clouds. But though never bound in the secret faith which in my nation ties one man to one woman, often have I seen the workings of that kindness which brings the two together. Go into the regions of my people, you will see the daughters of the land fluttering through the towns like many colored and joyful birds in the season of blossoms. You will meet them singing and rejoicing along the great paths of the country, and you will hear the woods ringing with their laughter. They are very excellent to behold, and the young men find pleasure in looking at them."

"Hugh!" ejaculated the attentive Mahtoree.

"Ay, well may you put faith in what you hear, for it is no lie. But when a youth has found a maiden to please him, he speaks to her in a voice so soft that

none else can hear. He does not say, My lodge is empty and there is room for another; but, Shall I build, and will the virgin show me near what spring she would dwell? His voice is sweeter than honey from the locust, and goes into the ear thrilling like the song of the wren. Therefore, if my brother wishes his words to be heard, he must speak with a white tongue."

Mahtoree pondered deeply, and in a manner that he did not attempt to conceal. It was reversing all the order of society, and, according to his established opinions, endangering the dignity of a chief for a warrior thus to humble himself before a woman. But as Inez sat before him, reserved and imposing in air, utterly unconscious of his object, and least of all suspecting the true purport of so extraordinary a visit, the savage felt the influence of a manner to which he was unaccustomed. Bowing his head in acknowledgment of his error, he stepped a little back, and placing himself in an attitude of easy dignity, he began to speak with the confidence of one who had been no less distinguished for eloquence than for deeds in arms. Keeping his eyes riveted on the unconscious bride of Middleton, he proceeded in the following words:

"I am a red-skin, but my eyes are dark. They have been open since many snows. They have seen many things—they know a brave from a coward. When a boy, I saw nothing but the bison and the deer. I went to the hunts, and I saw the cougar and the bear. This made Mahtoree a man. He talked with his mother no more. His ears were open to the wisdom of the old men. They told him everything—they told him of the Big-knives. He went on the war-path. He was then the last—now he is the first. What Dahcotah dare say he will go before Mahtoree into the hunting-grounds of the Pawnees? The chiefs met him at their doors, and they said, My son is without a home. They gave him their lodges, they gave him their riches, and they gave him their daughters. Then Mahtoree became a chief, as his fathers had been. He struck the warriors of all the nations, and he

could have chosen wives from the Pawnees, the Omahaws, and the Konzas; but he looked at the hunting-grounds, and not at his village. He thought a horse was pleasanter than a Dahcotah girl. But he found a flower on the prairies, and he plucked it and brought it into his lodge. He forgets that he is the master of a single horse. He gives them all to the stranger, for Mahtoree is not a thief; he will only keep the flower he found on the prairie. Her feet are very tender. She cannot walk to the door of her father; she will stay in the lodge of a valiant warrior forever."

When he had finished this extraordinary address, the Teton awaited to have it translated, with the air of a suitor who entertained no very disheartening doubts of his success. The trapper had not lost a syllable of the speech, and he now prepared himself to render it into English in such a manner as should leave its principal idea even more obscure than in the original. But, as his reluctant lips were in the act of parting, Ellen lifted a finger, and, with a keen glance from her quick eye at the still attentive Inez, she interrupted him:

"Spare your breath," she said; "all that a savage says is not to be repeated before a Christian lady."

Inez started, blushed, and bowed, with an air of reserve, as she coldly thanked the old man for his intentions, and observed that she could now wish to be alone.

"My daughters have no need of ears to understand what a great Dahcotah says," returned the trapper, addressing himself to the expecting Mahtoree. "The look he has given, and the signs he has made, are enough. They understand him; they wish to think of his words; for the children of great braves, such as their fathers are, do nothing without much thought."

With this explanation, so flattering to the energy of his eloquence, and so promising to his future hopes, the Teton was every way content. He made the customary ejaculation of assent, and prepared to retire. Saluting the females in

the cold but dignified manner of his people, he drew his robe about him, and moved from the spot where he had stood with an air of ill-concealed triumph.

But there had been a stricken though a motionless and unobserved auditor of the foregoing scene. Not a syllable had fallen from the lips of the long and anxiously expected husband that had not gone directly to the heart of his unoffending wife. In this manner had he wooed her from the lodge of her father, and it was to listen to similar pictures of the renown and deeds of the greatest brave in her tribe that she had shut her ears to the tender tales of so many of the Sioux youths.

As the Teton turned to leave his lodge in the manner just mentioned, he found this unexpected and half-forgotten object before him. She stood in the humble guise and with the shrinking air of an Indian girl, holding the pledge of their former love in her arms, directly in his path. Starting, the chief regained the marble-like indifference of countenance which distinguished in so remarkable a degree the restrained or more artificial expression of his features, and signed to her with an air of authority to give place.

"Is not Tachechana the daughter of a chief?" demanded a subdued voice, in which pride struggled with anguish; "were not her brothers braves?"

"Go; the men are calling their par-tisan. He has no ears for a woman."

"No," replied the suppliant; "it is not the voice of Tachechana that you hear, but this boy, speaking with the tongue of his mother. He is the son of a chief, and his words will go up to his father's ears. Listen to what he says. When was Mahtoree hungry, and Tachechana had not food for him? When did he go on the path of the Pawnees and find it empty, that my mother did not weep? When did he come back with the marks of their blows that she did not sing? What Sioux girl has given a brave son like me? Look at me well, that you may know me. My eyes are the eagle's. I look at the sun and laugh. In a little time the Dahcotahs will follow me to the hunts and on the war-path. Why does my father turn

his eyes from the woman that gives me milk? Why has he so soon forgotten the daughter of a mighty Sioux?"

There was a single instant, as the exulting father suffered his cold eye to wander to the face of the laughing boy, that the stern nature of the Teton seemed touched. But, shaking off the grateful sentiment, like one who would be gladly rid of any painful because reproachful emotion, he laid his hand calmly on the arm of his wife, and led her directly in front of Inez. Pointing to the sweet countenance that was beaming on her own, with a look of tenderness and commiseration, he paused; to allow his wife to contemplate a loveliness which was quite as excellent to her ingenuous mind as it had proved dangerous to the character of her faithless husband. When he thought abundant time had passed to make the contrast sufficiently striking, he suddenly raised a small mirror that dangled at her breast, an ornament he had himself bestowed, in an hour of fondness, as a compliment to her beauty, and placed her own dark image in its place. Wrapping his robe about him, the Teton motioned the trapper to follow, and stalked haughtily from the lodge, muttering as he went:

"Mahtoree is very wise! What nation has so great a chief as the Dahcotahs?"

Tachechana stood frozen into a statue of humility. Her mild and usually joyous countenance worked, as if the struggle within was about to dissolve the connection between her soul and the more material part whose deformity was becoming so loathsome. Inez and Ellen were utterly ignorant of the nature of her interview with her husband, though the quick and sharpened wits of the latter led her to suspect a truth to which the entire innocence of the former furnished no clew. They were both, however, about to tender those sympathies which are so natural to and so graceful in the sex, when their necessity seemed suddenly to cease. The convulsions in the features of the young Sioux disappeared, and her countenance became cold and rigid, like chiseled stone. A single expression of subdued anguish, which had made its impression on a brow that

had before contracted with sorrow, alone remained. It was never removed, in all the changes of seasons, fortunes, and years, which, in the vicissitudes of a suffering, female, savage life, she was subsequently doomed to endure. As in the case of a premature blight, let the plant quicken and revive as it may, the effects of that withering touch were always present.

Tachechana first stripped her person of every vestige of those rude but highly prized ornaments which the liberality of her husband had been wont to lavish on her, and she tendered them meekly, and without a murmur, as an offering to the superiority of Inez. The bracelets were forced from her wrists, the complicated mazes of beads from her leggings, and the broad silver band from her brow. Then she paused, long and painfully. But it would seem that the resolution she had once adopted was not to be conquered by the lingering emotions of any affection, however natural. The boy himself was next laid at the feet of her supposed rival, and well might the self-abased wife of the Teton believe that the burden of her sacrifice was now full.

While Inez and Ellen stood regarding these several strange movements with eyes of wonder, a low, soft, musical voice was heard, saying, in a language that to them was unintelligible :

"A strange tongue will tell my boy the manner to become a man. He will hear sounds that are new, but he will learn them, and forget the voice of his mother. It is the will of the Wahcondah, and a Sioux girl should not complain. Speak to him softly for his ears are very little ; when he is big, your words may be louder. Let him not be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman. Teach him to keep his eyes on the men. Show him how to strike them that do wrong, and let him never forget to return blow for blow. When he goes to hunt, the flower of the pale-faces," she concluded, using in bitterness the metaphor which had been supplied by the imagination of her truant husband, "will softly whisper in his ear that the skin of his mother was red, and that she was once the Fawn of the Dahcotahs."

Tachechana pressed a kiss on the lips of her son, and withdrew to the farther side of the lodge. Here she drew her light calico robe over her head, and took her seat, in token of humility, on the naked earth. All efforts to attract her attention were fruitless. She neither heard remonstrances nor felt the touch. Once or twice her voice rose, in a sort of wailing song, from beneath her quivering mantle, but it never mounted into the wildness of savage music. In this manner she remained unseen for hours, while events were occurring without the lodge which not only materially changed the complexion of her own fortunes, but left a lasting and deep impression on the future movements of the wandering Sioux.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I'll no swaggerers ; I am in good name and fame with the very best :—shut the door ; there come no swaggerers here. I have not lived all this while to have swaggering now ; shut the door, I pray you."
—SHAKESPEARE.

MAHTOREE encountered, at the door of his lodge, Ishmael, Abiram, and Esther. The first glance of his eye at the countenance of the heavy-molded squatter served to tell the cunning Teton that the treacherous truce he had made with these dupes of his superior sagacity was in some danger of a violent termination.

"Look you here, old gray-beard," said Ishmael, seizing the trapper and whirling him round as if he had been a top ! "that I am tired of carrying on a discourse with fingers and thumbs, instead of a tongue, ar' a natural fact ; so you'll play linguister and put my words into Indian, without much caring whether they suit the stomach of a red-skin or not."

"Say on, friend," calmly returned the trapper ; "they shall be given as plainly as you send them."

"Friend !" repeated the squatter, eyeing the other for an instant with an expression of indefinable meaning. "But it is no more than a word, and sounds break no bones and survey no farms. Tell this

thieving Sioux, then, that I come to claim the conditions of our solemn bargain, made at the foot of the rock."

When the trapper had rendered his meaning into the Sioux language, Mahtoree demanded, with an air of surprise:

"Is my brother cold? Buffalo-skins are plenty. Is he hungry? Let my young men carry venison into his lodges."

The squatter elevated his clinched fist in a menacing manner, and struck it with violence on the palm of his open hand, by way of confirming his determination, as he answered:

"Tell the deceitful liar I have not come like a beggar to pick his bones, but like a freeman asking for his own; and have it I will. And, moreover, tell him I claim that you, too, miserable sinner as you ar', should be given up to justice. There's no mistake. My prisoner, my niece, and you—I demand the three at his hands, according to a sworn agreement."

The immovable old man smiled with an expression of singular intelligence, as he answered:

"Friend squatter, you ask what few men would be willing to grant. You would first cut the tongue from the mouth of the Teton, and then the heart from his bosom."

"It is little that Ishmael Bush regards who or what is damaged in claiming his own. But put you the questions in straight-going Indian; and, when you speak of yourself, make such a sign as a white man will understand, in order that I may know there is no foul play."

The trapper laughed in his silent fashion, and muttered a few words to himself before he addressed the chief:

"Let the Dahcotah open his ears very wide," he said, "that big words may have room to enter. His friend, the Big-knife, comes with an empty hand, and he says that the Teton must fill it."

"Wagh! Mahtoree is a rich chief. He is master of the prairies."

"He must give the dark-hair."

The brow of the chief contracted in an ominous frown, that threatened instant destruction to the audacious squatter; but, as suddenly recollecting his policy, he craftily replied:

"A girl is too light for the hand of such a brave. I will fill it with buffaloes."

"He says he has need of the light-hair, too, who has his blood in her veins."

"She shall be the wife of Mahtoree; then the Long-knife will be the father of a chief."

"And me," continued the trapper, making one of those expressive signs by which the natives communicate with nearly the same facility as with their tongues, and turning to the squatter at the same time, in order that the latter might see he dealt fairly by him; "he asks for a miserable and worn-out trapper."

The Dahcotah threw his arm over the shoulder of the old man with an air of great affection, before he replied to this third and last demand:

"My friend is old," he said, "and cannot travel far. He will stay with the Tetons, that they may learn wisdom from his words. What Sioux has a tongue like my father? No; let his words be very soft, but let them be very clear. Mahtoree will give skins and buffaloes. He will give the young men of the pale-faces wives, but he cannot give away any who live in his own lodge."

Perfectly satisfied himself with this laconic reply, the chief was moving toward his expecting counselors, when, suddenly returning, he interrupted the translation of the trapper, by adding:

"Tell the Great Buffalo" (a name by which the Tetons had already christened Ishmael) "that Mahtoree has a hand that is always open. See," he added, pointing to the hard and wrinkled visage of the attentive Esther, "his wife is too old for so great a chief. Let him put her out of his lodge. Mahtoree loves him as a brother. He is his brother. He shall have the youngest wife of the Teton. Tachechana, the pride of the Sioux girls, shall cook his venison, and many braves will look at him with longing minds. Go; a Dahcotah is generous."

The singular coolness with which the Teton concluded this audacious proposal confounded even the practiced trapper. He stared after the retiring form of the Indian with an astonishment he did not

dare to conceal; nor did he renew his attempt at interpretation until the person of Mahtoree was blended with the cluster of warriors who had so long and with so characteristic patience awaited his return.

"The Teton chief has spoken very plainly," the old man continued; "he will not give you the lady, to whom the Lord in heaven knows you have no claim, unless it be such as the wolf has to the lamb. He will not give you the child you call your niece; and therein I acknowledge that I am far from certain he has the same justice on his side. Moreover, neighborsquatter, he flatly denies your demand for me, miserable and worthless as I am; nor do I think he has been unwise in so doing, seeing that I should have many reasons against journeying far in your company. But he makes you an offer, which it is right and convenient you should know. The Teton says through me, who am no more than a mouth-piece, and therein not answerable for the sin of his words, but he says, as this good woman is getting past the comely age, it is reasonable for you to tire of such a wife. He therefore tells you to turn her out of your lodge, and when it is empty he will send his own favorite, or rather her that was his favorite, the 'Skipping Fawn,' as the Sioux call her, to fill her place. You see, neighbor, though the red-skin is minded to keep your property, he is willing to give you wherewithal to make yourself some return!"

Ishmael listened to these replies to his several demands with that species of gathering indignation with which the duller tempers mount into the most violent paroxysms of rage. He even affected to laugh at the conceit of exchanging his long-tried partner for the more flexible support of the youthful Tachechana, though his voice was hollow and unnatural in the effort. But Esther was far from giving the proposal so facetious a reception. Lifting her voice to its most audible key, she broke forth, after catching her breath like one who had been in some imminent danger of strangulation, as follows:

"Hoity-toity! Who set an Indian up

for a maker and a breaker of the rights of wedded wives? Does he think a woman is a beast of the prairie, that she is to be chased from a village by dog and gun? Let the bravest squaw of them all come forth and boast of her doings; can she show such a brood as mine? A wicked tyrant is that thieving red-skin, and a bold rogue I warrant me. He would be captain in-doors as well as out! An honest woman is no better in his eyes than one of your broom-stick jumpers. And you, Ishmael Bush, the father of seven sons and so many comely daughters, to open *your* sinful mouth, except to curse him! Would ye disgrace color, and family, and nation, by mixing white blood with red, and would ye be the parent of a race of mules? The devil has often tempted you, my man, but never before has he set so cunning a snare as this. Go back among your children, friend; go, and remember that you are not a prowling bear, but a Christian man, and thank God that you ar' a lawful husband!"

The clamor of Esther was anticipated by the judicious trapper. He had easily foreseen that her meek temper would overflow at so scandalous a proposal as repudiation, and he now profited by the tempest to retire to a place where he was at least safe from any immediate violence on the part of her less excited but certainly more dangerous husband. Ishmael, who had made his demands with a stout determination to enforce them, was diverted by the windy torrent, like many a more obstinate husband, from his purpose; and, in order to appease a jealousy that resembled the fury with which the bear defends her cubs, was fain to retire to a distance from the lodge that was known to contain the unoffending object of the sudden uproar.

"Let your copper-colored minx come forth and show her tawny beauty before the face of a woman who has heard more than one church-bell, and seen a power of real quality!" cried Esther, flourishing her hand in triumph, as she drove Ishmael and Abiram before her, like two truant boys, toward their own encampment. "I warrant me, I warrant me, here is one

who would shortly talk her down ! Never think to tarry here, my men ; never think to shut an eye in a camp through which the devil walks as openly as if he were a gentleman, and sure of his welcome. Here, you Abner, Enoch, Jesse, where ar' ye gotten to ? Put to, put to ; if that weak-minded, soft-feeling man, your father, eats or drinks again in this neighborhood, we shall see him poisoned with the craft of the red-skins. Not that I care, I, who comes into my place, when it is once lawfully empty—but, Ishmael, I never thought that you, who have had one woman with a white skin, would find pleasure in looking on a brazen—ay, that she is copper ar' a fact ; you can't deny it, and, I warrant me, brazen enough is she too ! ”

Against this ebullition of wounded female pride, the experienced husband made no other head than by an occasional exclamation, which he intended to be the precursor of a simple asseveration of his own innocence. The fury of the woman would not be appeased. She listened to nothing but her own voice, and consequently nothing was heard but her mandates to depart.

The squatter had collected his beasts and loaded his wagons as a measure of precaution, before proceeding to the extremity he contemplated. Esther consequently found everything favorable to her wishes. The young men stared at each other, as they witnessed the extraordinary excitement of their mother, but took little interest in an event which, in the course of their experience, had found so many parallels. By command of their father, the tents were thrown into the vehicles as a sort of *réprisal* for the want of faith in their late ally, and then the train left the spot in its usual listless and sluggish order.

As a formidable division of well-armed borderers protected the rear of the retiring party, the Sioux saw it depart without manifesting the smallest evidence of surprise or resentment. The savage, like the tiger, rarely makes his attack on an enemy who expects him ; and, if the warriors of the Tetons meditated any hostility, it was

in the still and patient manner with which the feline beasts watch for the incautious moment in order to insure the blow. The counsels of Mahtoree, however, on whom so much of the policy of his people depended, lay deep in the depository of his own thoughts. Perhaps he rejoiced at so easy a manner of getting rid of claims so troublesome ; perhaps he awaited a fitting time to exhibit his power ; or it even might be that matters of so much greater importance were pressing on his mind, that it had not leisure to devote any of its faculties to an event of so much indifference.

But it would seem that, while Ishmael made such a concession to the awakened feelings of Esther, he was far from abandoning his original intentions. His train followed the course of the river for a mile, and then it came to a halt on the brow of the elevated land, and in a place which afforded the necessary facilities. Here he again pitched his tents, unharnessed his teams, sent his cattle on the bottom, and, in short, made all the customary preparations to pass the night, with the same coolness and deliberation as if he had not hurled an irritating defiance into the teeth of his dangerous neighbors.

In the meantime the Tetons proceeded to the more regular business of the hour. A fierce and savage joy had existed in the camp, from the instant when it had been announced that their own chief was returning with the long-dreaded and hated partisan of their enemies. For many hours the crones of the tribe had been going from lodge to lodge, in order to stimulate the tempers of the warriors to such a pass as might leave but little room for mercy. To one they spoke of a son, whose scalp was drying in the smoke of a Pawnee lodge. To another, they enumerated his own scars, his disgraces and defeats ; with a third, they dwelt on his losses of skins and horses ; and a fourth was reminded of vengeance by a significant question concerning some flagrant adventure in which he was known to have been a sufferer.

By these means the men had been so far excited as to have assembled, in the man-

ner already related, though it still remained a matter of doubt how far they intended to carry their revenge. A variety of opinions prevailed on the policy of executing their prisoners; and Mahtoree had suspended the discussions in order to ascertain how far the measure might propitiate or retard his own particular views. Hitherto the consultations had merely been preliminary, with a design that each chief might discover the number of supporters his particular views would be likely to obtain when the important subject should come before a more solemn council of the tribe. The moment for the latter had now arrived, and the preparations were made with a dignity and solemnity suited to the momentous interests of the occasion.

With a refinement in cruelty that none but an Indian would have imagined, the place selected for the grave deliberation was immediately about the post to which the most important of its subjects was attached. Middleton and Paul were brought in their bonds, and laid at the feet of the Pawnee; then the men began to take their places, according to their several claims to distinction. As warrior after warrior approached, he seated himself in the wide circle with a mien as composed and thoughtful as if his mind were actually in a condition to deal out justice, tempered, as it should be, with the heavenly quality of mercy. A place was reserved for three or four of the principal chiefs; and a few of the oldest of the women, as withered as age, exposure, hardships, and lives of savage passions could make them, thrust themselves into the foremost circle with a temerity to which they were impelled by their insatiable desire for cruelty, and which nothing but their years and their long-trying fidelity to the nation could have excused.

All, but the chiefs already named, were now in their places. These had delayed their appearance, in the vain hope that their own unanimity might smooth the way to that of their respective factions; for, notwithstanding the superior influence of Mahtoree, his power was to be maintained only by constant appeals to

the opinions of his inferiors. As these important personages at length entered the circle in a body, their sullen looks and clouded brows, notwithstanding the time given for consultation, sufficiently proclaimed the discontent which reigned among them. The eye of Mahtoree was varying in its expression, from sudden gleams, that seemed to kindle with the burning impulses of his soul, to that cold and guarded steadiness which was thought more peculiarly to become a chief in council. He took his seat with the studied simplicity of a demagogue; though the keen and flashing glance that he immediately threw around the silent assembly betrayed the more predominant temper of a tyrant.

When all were present, an aged warrior lighted the great pipe of his people, and blew the smoke toward the four quarters of the heavens. So soon as this propitiatory offering was made, he tendered it to Mahtoree, who, in affected humility, passed it to a gray-headed chief by his side. After the influence of the soothing weed had been courted by all, a grave silence succeeded, as if each was not only qualified to, but actually did, think more deeply on the matters before them. Then an old Indian arose and spoke as follows:

"The eagle, at the falls of the endless river, was in its egg many snows after my hand had struck a Pawnee. What my tongue says my eyes have seen. Bohrecheena is very old. The hills have stood longer in their places than he has been in his tribe, and the rivers were full and empty before he was born; but where is the Sioux that knows it besides myself? What he says, they will hear. If any of his words fall to the ground, they will pick them up and hold them to their ears. If any blow away in the wind, my young men, who are very nimble, will catch them. Now listen. Since water ran and trees grew, the Sioux has found the Pawnee on his war-path. As the cougar loves the antelope, the Dahcotah loves his enemy. When the wolf finds the fawn, does he lie down and sleep? When the panther sees the doe at the spring, does he shut

his eyes? You know that he does not. He drinks, too; but it is of blood! A Sioux is a leaping panther, a Pawnee a trembling deer. Let my children hear me. They will find my words good. I have spoken."

A deep guttural exclamation of assent broke from the lips of all the partisans of Mahtoree, as they listened to this sanguinary advice from one who was certainly among the most aged men of the nation. That deeply seated love of vengeance, which formed so prominent a feature in their characters, was gratified by his metaphorical allusions; and the chief himself augured favorably of the success of his own schemes, by the number of supporters who manifested themselves to be in favor of the counsels of his friend. But still unanimity was far from prevailing. A long and decorous pause was suffered to succeed the words of the first speaker in order that all might duly deliberate on their wisdom, before another chief took on himself the office of refutation. The second orator, though past the prime of his days, was far less aged than the one who had preceded him. He felt the disadvantage of this circumstance, and endeavored to counteract it, as far as possible, by the excess of his humility.

"I am but an infant," he commenced, looking furtively around him, in order to detect how far his well-established character for prudence and courage contradicted his assertion. "I have lived with the women since my father has been a man. If my head is getting gray, it is not because I am old. Some of the snow which fell on it while I have been sleeping on the war-paths has frozen there, and the hot sun near the Osage villages has not been strong enough to melt it." A low murmur was heard, expressive of admiration of the services to which he thus artfully alluded. The orator modestly awaited for the feeling to subside a little, and then he continued, with increasing energy, encouraged by their commendations: "But the eyes of a young brave are good. He can see very far. He is a lynx. Look at me well. I will now turn my back, that you may see both sides of

me. Now do you know I am your friend, for you look on a part that a Pawnee never yet saw. Now look at my face—not in this seam, for there your eyes can never see into my spirit. It is a hole cut by a Konza. But there is an opening, made by the Wahcondah, through which you may look into the soul. What am I? A Dabcotah, within and without. You know it. Therefore hear me. The blood of every creature on the prairie is red. Who can tell the spot where a Pawnee was struck, from the place where my young men took a bison? It is of the same color. The Master of Life made them for each other. He made them alike. But will the grass grow green where a pale-face is killed? My young men must not think *that* nation so numerous that it will not miss a warrior. They call them over often, and say, 'Where are my sons?' If they miss one, they will send into the prairies to look for him. If they cannot find him, they will tell their runners to ask for him among the Sioux. My brethren, the Big-knives are not fools. There is a mighty medicine of their nation now among us; who can tell how loud is his voice or how long is his arm?—"

The speech of the orator, who was beginning to enter into his subject with warmth, was cut short by the impatient Mahtoree, who suddenly arose, and exclaimed, in a voice in which authority was mingled with contempt, and at the close with a keen tone of irony also:

"Let my young men lead the evil spirit of the pale-faces to the council. My brother shall see his medicine face to face!"

A death-like and solemn stillness succeeded this extraordinary interruption. It not only involved a deep offense against the sacred courtesy of debate, but the mandate was likely to brave the unknown power of one of those incomprehensible beings whom few Indians were enlightened enough at that day to regard without reverence, or few hardy enough to oppose. The subordinates, however, obeyed, and Obed was led forth from the lodge mounted on Asinus, with a ceremony and state which was certainly intended for derision, but which nevertheless was greatly en-

hanced by fear. As they entered the ring, Mahtoree, who had foreseen and had endeavored to anticipate the influence of the doctor by bringing him into contempt, cast an eye around the assembly in order to gather his success in the various dark visages by which he was encircled.

Truly Nature and art had combined to produce such an effect from the air and appointments of the naturalist as might have made him the subject of wonder in any place. His head had been industriously shaved, after the most improved fashion of Sioux taste. A gallant scalp-lock, which would probably not have been spared had the doctor himself been consulted in the matter, was all that remained of an exuberant, and, at that particular season of the year, far from uncomfortable head of hair. Thick coats of paint had been laid on the naked poll, and certain fanciful designs in the same material had even been extended into the neighborhood of the eyes and mouth, lending to the keen expression of the former a look of twinkling cunning, and to the dogmatism of the latter not a little of the grimness of necromancy. He had been despoiled of his upper garments, and in their stead his body was sufficiently protected from the cold by a fantastically painted robe of dressed deerskin. As if in mockery of his pursuit, sundry toads, frogs, lizards, butterflies, etc., all duly prepared to take their places at some future day in his own private cabinet, were attached to the solitary lock on his head, to his ears, and to various other conspicuous parts of his person. If, in addition to the effect produced by these quaint auxiliaries to his costume, we add the portentous and troubled gleamings of doubt which rendered his visage doubly austere, and proclaimed the misgivings of the worthy Obed's mind as he beheld his personal dignity thus prostrated, and, what was of far greater moment in his eyes, himself led forth, as he firmly believed, to be the victim of some heathenish sacrifice, the reader will find no difficulty in giving credit to the sensation of awe that was already excited by his appearance in a band already more than half prepared to

worship him as a powerful agent of the evil spirit.

Weucha led Asinus directly into the center of the circle and, leaving them together (for the legs of the naturalist were attached to the beast in such a manner that the two animals might be said to be incorporated, and to form a new order), he withdrew to his proper place, gazing at the conjurer as he retired with a wonder and admiration that were natural to the groveling dullness of his mind.

The astonishment seemed mutual between the spectators and the subject of this strange exhibition. If the Tetons contemplated the mysterious attributes of the medicine with awe and fear, the doctor gazed on every side of him with a mixture of quite as many extraordinary emotions, in which the latter sensation, however, formed no inconsiderable ingredient. Everywhere his eyes, which just at that moment possessed a secret magnifying quality, seemed to rest on several dark, savage, and obdurate countenances at once, from none of which could he extract a solitary gleam of sympathy or commiseration. At length his wandering gaze fell on the grave and decent features of the trapper, who, with Hector at his feet, stood in the edge of the circle, leaning on that rifle which he had been permitted, as an acknowledged friend, to resume, and apparently musing on the events that were likely to succeed a council marked by so many and such striking ceremonies.

"Venerable venator, or hunter, or trapper," said the disconsolate Obed, "I rejoice greatly in meeting thee again. I fear that the precious time which had been allotted me, in order to complete a mighty labor, is drawing to a premature close, and I would gladly unburden my mind to one who, if not a pupil of science, has at least some of the knowledge which civilization imparts to its meanest subjects. Doubtless many and earnest inquiries will be made after my fate, by the learned societies of the world, and perhaps expeditions will be sent into these regions to remove any doubt which may arise on so important a subject. I esteem myself

happy that a man who speaks the vernacular is present, to preserve the record of my end. You will say that after a well-spent and glorious life, I died a martyr to science, and a victim to mental darkness. As I expect to be particularly calm and abstracted in my last moments, if you add a few details concerning the fortitude and scholastic dignity with which I met my death, it may serve to encourage future aspirants for similar honors, and assuredly give offense to no one. And now, friend trapper, as a duty I owe to human nature, I will conclude by demanding if all hope has deserted me, or if any means still exist by which so much valuable information may be rescued from the grasp of ignorance and preserved to the pages of natural history."

The old man lent an attentive ear to this melancholy appeal, and apparently he reflected on every side of the important question, before he would presume to answer.

"I take it, friend physicianer," he at length gravely replied, "that the chances of life and death, in your particular case, depend altogether on the will of Providence, as it may be pleased to manifest it through the accursed windings of Indian cunning. For my own part, I see no great difference in the main end to be gained, inasmuch as it can matter no one greatly, yourself excepted, whether you live or die."

"Would you account the fall of a cornerstone from the foundation of the edifice of learning a matter of indifference to contemporaries or to posterity?" interrupted Obed. "Besides, my aged associate," he reproachfully added, "the interest that a man has in his own existence is by no means trifling, however it may be eclipsed by his devotion to more general and philanthropic feelings."

"What I would say is this," resumed the trapper, who was far from understanding all the subtle distinctions with which his more learned companion so often saw fit to embellish his discourse; "there is but one birth and one death to all things, be it hound or be it deer; be it red skin or be it white. Both are in the hands of the Lord,

it being as unlawful for man to strive to hasten the one, as impossible to prevent the other. But I will not say that something may not be done to put the last moment aside, for a while at least, and therefore it is a question that any one has a right to put to his own wisdom, how far he will go, and how much pain he will suffer, to lengthen out a time that may have been too long already. Many a dreary winter and scorching summer has gone by since I have turned to the right hand or to the left, to add an hour to a life that already stretched beyond fourscore years. I keep myself as ready to answer to my name as a soldier at evening roll-call. In my judgment, if your cases are left to Indian tempers, the policy of the Great Sioux will lead his people to sacrifice you all; nor do I put much dependence on his seeming love for me; therefore it becomes a question whether you are ready for such a journey; and if, being ready, whether this is not as good a time as another. Should my opinion be asked, thus far will I give it in your favor; that is to say, it is my belief your life has been innocent enough, touching any great offenses that you may have committed, though honesty compels me to add, that I think all you can lay claim to, on the score of activity in deeds, will not amount to anything worth naming in the great account."

Obed turned a rueful eye on the calm, philosophic countenance of the other, as he answered with so discouraging a statement of his case, clearing his throat as he did so, in order to conceal the desperate concern which began to beset his faculties, with a vestige of that pride which rarely deserts poor human nature, even in the greatest emergencies.

"I believe, venerable hunter," he replied, "considering the question in all its bearings, and assuming that your theory is just, it will be the safest to conclude that I am not prepared to make so hasty a departure, and that measures of precaution should be forthwith resorted to."

"Being in that mind," returned the deliberate trapper, "I will act for you as I would for myself; though as time has begun to roll down the hill with you, I will

just advise that you will look to your case speedily, for it may so happen that your name will be heard when quite as little prepared to answer to it as now."

With this amicable understanding, the old man drew back again into the ring, where he stood musing on the course he should now adopt, with the singular mixture of decision and resignation that proceeded from his habits and humility, and which united to form a character in which excessive energy, and the most meek submission to the will of Providence, were oddly enough combined.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"The witch, in Smithfield, shall be burned to ashes,
And you three shall be strangled on the gallows."
—SHAKESPEARE.

THE Sioux had awaited the issue of the foregoing dialogue with commendable patience. Most of the band were restrained by the secret awe with which they regarded the mysterious character of Obed; while a few of the more intelligent chiefs gladly profited by the opportunity to arrange their thoughts for the struggle that was plainly foreseen. Mahtoree, influenced by neither of these feelings, was content to show the trapper how much he conceded to his pleasure; and when the old man discontinued the discourse, he received from the chief a glance that was intended to remind him of the patience with which he had awaited his movements. A profound and motionless silence succeeded the short interruption. Then Mahtoree arose, evidently prepared to speak. First placing himself in an attitude of dignity, he turned a steady and severe look on the whole assembly. The expression of his eye, however, changed as it glanced across the different countenances of his supporters and of his opponents. To the former the look, though stern, was not threatening, while it seemed to tell the latter all the hazards they incurred, in daring to brave the resentment of one so powerful.

Still in the midst of so much *hauteur* and confidence, the sagacity and cunning of

the Teton did not desert him. When he had thrown the gauntlet, as it were, to the whole tribe, and sufficiently asserted his claim to superiority, his mien became more affable and his eye less angry. Then it was that he raised his voice, in the midst of a death-like stillness, varying its tones to suit the changing character of his images and of his eloquence.

"What is a Sioux?" the chief sagaciously began. "He is the ruler of the prairies, and master of its beasts. The fishes in the 'river of the troubled waters' know him, and come at his call. He is a fox in counsel, an eagle in sight, a grizzly bear in combat. A Dahcotah is a man!" After waiting for the low murmur of approbation which followed this flattering portrait of his people to subside, the Teton continued: "What is a Pawnee? A thief, who only steals from women; a red-skin who is not a brave; a hunter that begs for his venison. In council he is a squirrel, hopping from place to place; he is an owl that goes on the prairies at night; in battle he is an elk, whose legs are long. A Pawnee is a woman." Another pause succeeded, during which a yell of delight broke from several mouths, and a demand was made that the taunting words should be translated to the unconscious subject of their biting contempt. The old man took his cue from the eyes of Mahtoree, and complied. Hard-Heart listened gravely, and then, as if apprised that his time to speak had not arrived, he once more bent his look on the vacant air. The orator watched his countenance with an expression that manifested how inextinguishable was the hatred he felt for the only chief, far and near, whose fame might advantageously be compared with his own. Though disappointed in not having touched the pride of one whom he regarded as a boy, he proceeded—what he considered as far more important to quicken the tempers of the men of his own tribe, in order that they might be prepared to work his savage purposes. "If the earth was covered with rats, which are good for nothing," he said, "there would be no room for buffaloes, which give food and clothes to an Indian. If the prairies were covered

with Pawnees, there would be no room for the foot of a Dahcotah. A Loup is a rat, a Sioux a heavy buffalo; let the buffaloes tread upon the rats, and make room for themselves.

"My brothers, a little child has spoken to you. He tells you his hair is not gray, but frozen; that the grass will not grow where a pale-face has died! Does he know the color of the blood of a Big-knife? No! I know he does not; he has never seen it. What Dahcotah besides Mahtoree has ever struck a pale-face? Not one. But Mahtoree must be silent. Every Teton will shut his ears when he speaks. The scalps over his lodge were taken by women. They were taken by Mahtoree, and he is a woman. His mouth is shut; he waits for the feasts to sing among the girls!"

Notwithstanding the exclamations of regret and resentment which followed so abasing a declaration, the chief took his seat, as if determined to speak no more. But the murmurs grew louder and more general, and there were threatening symptoms that the council would dissolve itself in confusion; and he arose and resumed his speech, by changing his manner to the fierce and hurried enunciation of a warrior bent on revenge.

"Let my young men go to look for Tetao!" he cried; "they will find his scalp drying in Pawnee smoke. Where is the son of Bohrecheena? His bones are whiter than the faces of his murderers. Is Mahhah asleep in his lodge? You know it is many moons since he started for the blessed prairies; would he were here, that he might say of what color was the hand that took his scalp!"

In this strain the artful chief continued for many minutes, calling those warriors by name who were known to have met their deaths in battle with the Pawnees, or in some of those lawless frays which so often occurred between the Sioux bands and a class of white men who were but little removed from them in the qualities of civilization. Time was not given to reflect on the merits or rather the demerits of most of the different individuals to whom he alluded, in consequence of the

rapid manner in which he ran over their names; but so cunningly did he time his events, and so thrillingly did he make his appeals, aided as they were by the power of his deep-toned and stirring voice, that each of them struck an answering chord in the breast of some one of his auditors.

It was in the midst of one of his highest flights of eloquence that a man, so aged as to walk with the greatest difficulty, entered the very center of the circle, and took his stand directly in front of the speaker. An ear of great acuteness might possibly have detected that the tones of the orator faltered a little, as his flashing look first fell on this unexpected object; though the change was so trifling, that none but such as thoroughly knew the parties would have suspected it. The stranger had once been as distinguished for his beauty and proportions, as had been his eagle eye for its irresistible and terrible glance. But his skin was now wrinkled, and his features furrowed with so many scars, as to have obtained for him, half a century before, from the French of the Canadas, a title which has been borne by so many of the heroes of France, and which had now been adopted into the language of the wild horde of whom we are writing, as the one most expressive of the deeds of their own brave. The murmurs of "*Le Balafré!*" that rang through the assembly when he appeared, announced not only his name and the high estimation of his character, but how extraordinary his visit was considered. As he neither spoke nor moved, however, the sensation created by his appearance soon subsided, and then every eye was again turned upon the speaker, and every ear once more drank in the intoxication of his maddening appeals.

It would have been easy to have traced the triumph of Mahtoree in the reflecting countenances of his auditors. It was not long before a look of ferocity and of revenge was to be seen seated on the grim visages of most of the warriors, and each new and crafty allusion to the policy of extinguishing their enemies, was followed by fresh and less restrained bursts of approbation. In the height of this success,

the Teton closed his speech by a rapid appeal to the pride and hardihood of his native band, and suddenly took his seat.

In the midst of the murmurs of applause which succeeded so remarkable an effort of eloquence, a low, feeble and hollow voice was heard rising on the ear, as if it rolled from the inmost cavities of the human chest, and gathered strength and energy as it issued into the air. A solemn stillness followed the sounds, and then the lips of the aged man were first seen to move.

"The day of Le Balafré is near its end," were the first words that were distinctly audible. "He is like a buffalo on whom the hair will grow no longer. He will soon be ready to leave his lodge, to go in search of another that is far from the villages of the Sioux; therefore, what he has to say concerns not him, but those he leaves behind him. His words are like the fruit on the tree, ripe, and fit to be given to chiefs.

"Many snows have fallen since Le Balafré has been found on the war-path. His blood has been very hot, but it has had time to cool. The Wahcondah gives him dreams of war no longer; he sees that it is better to live in peace.

"My brothers, one foot is turned to the happy hunting grounds, the other will soon follow, and then an old chief will be seen looking for the prints of his father's moccasins, that he may make no mistake, but be sure to come before the Master of Life by the same path as so many good Indians have already traveled. But who will follow? Le Balafré has no son. His oldest has ridden too many Pawnee horses; the bones of the youngest have been gnawed by Konza dogs! Le Balafré has come to look for a young arm on which he may lean, and to find a son, that when he is gone his lodge may not be empty. Tachecana, the skipping fawn of the Tetons, is too weak to prop a warrior who is old. She looks before her, and not backward. Her mind is in the lodge of her husband."

The enunciation of the veteran warrior had been calm, but distinct and decided. His declaration was received in silence; and though several of the chiefs, who were in the counsels of Mahtoree, turned their eyes on their leader, none pre-

sumed to oppose so aged and so venerated a brave in a resolution that was strictly in conformity to the usages of the nation. The Teton himself was content to await the result with seeming composure, though the gleams of ferocity that played about his eye, occasionally betrayed the nature of those feelings with which he witnessed a procedure that was likely to rob him of that one of all his intended victims whom he most hated.

In the meantime Le Balafré moved with a slow and painful step toward the captives. He stopped before the person of Hard-Heart, whose faultless form, unchanging eye, and lofty mien he contemplated long with high and evident satisfaction. Then making a gesture of authority, he awaited until his order had been obeyed, and the youth was released from the post and his bonds by the same blow of the knife. When the young warrior was led nearer to his dimmed and failing sight, the examination was renewed with strictness of scrutiny, and that admiration which physical excellence is so apt to excite in the breast of a savage.

"It is good," the wary veteran murmured, when he found that all the skill in the requisites of a brave could detect no blemish; "this is a leaping panther!—Does my son speak with the tongue of a Teton?"

The intelligence which lighted the eyes of the captive betrayed how well he understood the question, but still he was far too haughty to communicate his ideas through the medium of a language that belonged to a hostile people. Some of the surrounding warriors explained to the old chief that the captive was a Pawnee-Loup.

"My son opened his eyes on the 'waster of the wolves,'" said Le Balafré, in the language of that nation, "but he will shut them in the bend of the 'river with a troubled stream.' He was born at Pawnee, but he will die at a Dahcotah. Look at me. I am a sycamore that once covered many with my shadow. The leaves are fallen and the branches begin to drop.

But a single sucker is springing from my roots; it is a little vine, and it winds itself about a tree that is green. I have long looked for one fit to grow by my side. Now I have found him. *Le Balafré*, is no longer without a son; his name will not be forgotten when he is gone!—Men of the *Tetons*, I take this youth into my lodge.”

No one was bold enough to dispute a right that had so often been exercised by warriors far inferior to the present speaker, and the adoption was listened to in grave and respectful silence. *Le Balafré*, took his intended son by the arm, and, leading him into the very center of the circle, he stepped aside with an air of triumph, in order that the spectators might approve of his choice. *Mahtoree* betrayed no evidence of his intentions, but rather seemed to wait a moment better suited to the crafty policy of his character. The more experienced and sagacious chiefs distinctly foresaw the utter impossibility of two partisans so renowned, so hostile, and who had so long been rivals in fame, as their prisoner and their native leader, existing amicably in the same tribe. Still the character of *Le Balafré* was so imposing, and the custom to which he had resorted so sacred, that none dared to lift a voice in opposition to the measure. They watched the result with increasing interest, but with a coldness of demeanor that concealed the nature of their inquietude. From this state of embarrassment, and, as it might readily have proved, of disorganization, the tribe was unexpectedly relieved by the decision of the one most interested in the success of the aged chief's designs.

During the whole of the foregoing scene it would have been difficult to have traced a single distinct emotion in the lineaments of the captive. He had heard his release proclaimed with the same indifference as the order to bind him to the stake. But now that the moment had arrived when it became necessary to make his election, he spoke in a way to prove that the fortitude which had brought him so distinguished a name, had in no degree deserted him.

“My father is very old, but he has not

yet looked upon everything,” said *Hard-Heart*, in a voice so clear as to be heard by all in presence. “He has never seen a buffalo change to a bat: he will never see a *Pawnee* become a *Sioux*.”

There was a suddenness, and yet a calmness, in the manner of delivering this decision, which assured most of the auditors that it was unalterable. The heart of *Le Balafré*, however, was yearning toward the youth, and the fondness of age was not so readily repulsed. Reproving the burst of admiration and triumph to which the boldness of the declaration and the freshened hopes of revenge had given rise, by turning his gleaming eye around the band, the veteran again addressed his adopted child, as if his purpose was not to be denied.

“It is well,” he said, “such are the words a brave should use, that the warriors may see his heart. The day has been when the voice of *Le Balafré* was loudest among the lodges of the *Konzas*. But the root of a white-hair is wisdom. My child will show the *Tetons* that he is a brave by striking their enemies. Men of the *Dahcotahs*, this is my son!”

The *Pawnee* hesitated a moment, and then, stepping in front of the chief, he took his hard and wrinkled hand, and laid it with reverence on his head, as if to acknowledge the extent of his obligation. Then, recoiling a step, he raised his person to its greatest elevation, and looked upon the hostile band by whom he was environed, with an air of loftiness and disdain, as he spoke aloud in the language of the *Sioux*:

“*Hard-Heart* has looked at himself within and without. He has thought of all he has done in the hunts and in the wars. Everywhere he is the same. There is no change. He is in all things a *Pawnee*. He has struck so many *Tetons* that he could never eat in their lodges. His arrows would fly backward; the point of his lance would be on the wrong end; their friends would weep at every whoop he gave; their enemies would laugh. Do the *Tetons* know a *Loup*! Let them look at him again. His head is painted; his arm is flesh; his heart is rock. When the *Tetons* see the sun come from the *Rocky*

Mountains, and move toward the land of the pale-faces, the mind of Hard-Heart will soften, and his spirit will become Sioux. Until that day he will live and die a Pawnee."

A yell of delight, in which admiration and ferocity were strangely mingled, interrupted the speaker, and but too clearly announced the character of his fate. The captive awaited a moment for the commotion to subside, and then, turning again to Le Balafré, he continued, in tones conciliating and kind, as if he felt the propriety of softening his refusal in a manner not to wound the pride of one who would so gladly be his benefactor:

"Let my father lean heavier on the fawn of the Dahcotahs," he said; "she is weak now, but as her lodge fills with young she will be stronger. See," he added, directing the eyes of the other to the earnest countenance of the attentive trapper, "Hard-Heart is not without a gray-head to show him the path to the blessed prairies. If he ever has another father, it shall be that just warrior."

Le Balafré turned away in disappointment from the youth and approached the stranger who had thus anticipated his design. The examination between these two aged men was long, mutual, and curious. It was not easy to detect the real character of the trapper through the mask which the hardships of so many years had laid upon his features, especially when aided by his wild and peculiar attire. Some moments elapsed before the Teton spoke, and then it was in doubt whether he addressed one like himself or some wanderer of that race who, he had heard, were spreading themselves like hungry locusts throughout the land.

"The head of my brother is very white," he said, "but the eye of Le Balafré is no longer like the eagle's. Of what color is his skin?"

"The Wahcondah made me like these you see waiting for a Dahcotah judgment, but fair and foul has colored me darker than the skin of a fox. What of that? though the bark is ragged and riven, the heart of the tree is sound."

"My brother is a Big-knife! Let him

turn his face toward the setting sun and open his eyes. Does he see the salt lake beyond the mountains?"

"The time has been, Teton, when few could see the white on an eagle's head farther than I; but the glare of four-score-and-seven winters has dimmed my eyes, and but little can I boast of sight in my latter days. Does the Sioux think a pale-face a god, that he can look through hills?"

"Then let my brother look at me. I am nigh him and he can see that I am a foolish red-man. Why cannot his people see everything, since they crave all?"

"I understand you, chief, nor will I gainsay the justice of your words, seeing that they are too much founded in truth. But, though born of the race you love so little, my worst enemy, not even a lying Mingo, would dare to say that I ever laid hands on the goods of another, except such as were taken in manful warfare; or that I ever coveted more ground than the Lord has intended each man to fill."

"And yet my brother has come among the red-skins to find a son?"

The trapper laid a finger on the naked shoulder of Le Balafré, and looked into his scarred countenance with a wistful and confidential expression, as he answered:

"Ay, but it was only that I might do good to the boy. If you think, Dahcotah, that I adopted the youth in order to prop my age, you do me as much injustice to my good-will as you seem to know little of the merciless intentions of your own people. I have made him my son that he may know that one is left behind him.—Peace, Hector, peace! Is this decent, pup, when graybeards are counseling together, to break in upon their discourse with the whinings of a hound?—The dog is old, Teton; and, though well taught in respect to behavior, he is getting, like ourselves, I fancy, something forgetful of the fashions of his youth."

Further discourse between these veterans was interrupted by a discordant yell, which burst at that moment from the lips of the dozen withered crones who have already been mentioned as having forced themselves into a conspicuous part

of the circle. The outcry was excited by a sudden change in the air of Hard-Heart. When the old men turned toward the youth, they saw him standing in the very center of the ring, with his head erect, his eyes fixed on vacancy, one leg advanced and an arm a little raised, as if all his faculties were absorbed in the act of listening. A smile lighted his countenance for a single moment, and then the whole man sank again into his former look of dignity and coldness, suddenly recalled to self-possession. The movement had been construed into contempt, and even the tempers of the chiefs began to be excited. Unable to restrain their fury, the women broke into the circle in a body, and commenced their attack by loading the captive with the most bitter revilings. boasted of the various exploits which their sons had achieved at the expense of the different tribes of the Pawnees. They undervalued his own reputation, and told him to look at Mahtoree, if he had never yet seen a warrior. They accused him of having been suckled by a doe, and of having drunk in cowardice with his mother's milk. In short, they lavished upon their unmoved captive a torrent of that vindictive abuse in which the women of the savages are so well-known to excel, but which have been too often described to need repetition here.

The effect of this outbreking was inevitable. Le Balafré turned away disappointed, and hid himself in the crowd; while the trapper, whose honest features were working with inward emotion, pressed nigher to his young friend, as those who are linked to the criminal by ties so strong as to brave the opinions of men are often seen to stand about the place of execution to support his dying moments. The excitement soon spread among the inferior warriors, though the chiefs still forebore to make the signal which committed the victim to their mercy. Mahtoree, who had awaited such a movement among his fellows, with the wary design of concealing his own jealous hatred, soon grew weary of delay, and, by a glance of his eye, encouraged the tormentors to proceed.

Weucha, who, eager for this sanction, had long stood watching the countenance of the chief, bounded forward at the signal like a bloodhound loosened from the leash. Forcing his way into the center of the hags, who were already proceeding from abuse to violence, he reproved their impatience, and bade them wait until a warrior had begun to torment, and then they should see their victim shed tears like a woman.

The heartless savage commenced his efforts by flourishing his tomahawk about the head of the captive, in such a manner as to give reason to suppose that each blow would bury the weapon in the flesh, while it was so governed as not to touch the skin. To this customary expedient, Hard-Heart was perfectly insensible. His eye kept the same steady, riveted look on the air, though the glittering ax described in its evolutions a bright circle of light before his countenance. Frustrated in this attempt, the callous Sioux laid the cold edge on the naked head of the victim, and began to describe the different manners in which a prisoner might be flayed. The women kept time to his cruelties with their taunts, and endeavored to force some expression of the lingerings of nature from the insensible features of the Pawnee. But he evidently reserved himself for the chiefs, and for those moments of extreme anguish, when the loftiness of his spirit might evince itself in a manner better becoming his high and untarnished reputation.

The eyes of the trapper followed every movement of the tomahawk with the interest of a real father, until at length, unable to command his indignation, he exclaimed:

"My son has forgotten his cunning. This is a low-minded Indian, and one easily hurried into folly. I cannot do the thing myself, for my traditions forbid a dying warrior to revile his persecutors, but the gifts of a red-skin are different. Let the Pawnee say the bitter word, and purchase an easy death. I will answer for his success, provided he speaks before the grave men set their wisdom to back the folly of this fool."

The savage Sioux, who heard his words

without comprehending their meaning, turned to the speaker and menaced him with death for his temerity.

"Ay, work your will," said the unflinching old man; "I am as ready now as I shall be to-morrow. Though it would be a death that an honest man might not wish to die. Look at that noble Pawnee, Teton, and see what a red-skin may become who fears the Master of Life, and follows his laws. How many of your people has he sent to the distant prairies?" he continued, in a sort of pious fraud, thinking that, while the danger menaced himself, there could surely be no sin in extolling the merits of another: "how many howling Sioux has he struck like a warrior in open combat, while arrows were sailing in the air plentier than flakes of falling snow? Go! will Weucha speak the name of one enemy he has ever struck?"

"Hard-Heart!" shouted the Sioux, turning in his fury and aiming a deadly blow at the head of his victim. His arm fell into the hollow of the captive's hand. For a single moment the two stood, as if entranced, in that attitude, the one paralyzed by so unexpected a resistance, and the other bending his head, not to meet his death, but in the act of the most intense attention. The women screamed with triumph, for they thought the nerves of the captive had at length failed him. The trapper trembled for the honor of his friend; and Hector, as if conscious of what was passing, raised his nose into the air, and uttered a piteous howl.

But the Pawnee hesitated only for that moment. Raising the other hand like lightning, the tomahawk flashed in the air, and Weucha sank to his feet brained to the eye. Then cutting away with the bloody weapon, he darted through the opening left by the frightened women, and seemed to descend the declivity at a single bound.

Had a bolt from Heaven fallen in the midst of the Teton band, it would not have occasioned greater consternation than this act of desperate hardihood. A shrill, plaintive cry burst from the lips of all the women, and there was a moment that even the oldest warriors appeared to have lost their faculties. This stupor

endured only for the instant. It was succeeded by a yell of revenge that burst from a hundred throats, while as many warriors started forward at the cry, bent on the most bloody retribution. But a powerful and authoritative call from Mah-toree arrested every foot. The chief, in whose countenance disappointment and rage were struggling with the affected composure of his station, extended an arm toward the river, and the whole mystery was explained.

Hard-Heart had already crossed half the bottom which lay between the acclivity and the water. At this precise moment a band of armed and mounted Pawnees turned a swell, and galloped to the margin of the stream, into which the plunge of the fugitive was distinctly heard. A few minutes sufficed for his vigorous arm to conquer the passage, and then the shout from the opposite shore told the humbled Tetons the whole extent of the triumph of their adversaries.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"If that shepherd be not in hand-fast, let him fly; the curses he shall have, the tortures he shall feel, will break the back of man, the heart of monster."—SHAKESPEARE.

It will readily be seen that the event just related was attended by an extraordinary sensation among the Sioux. In leading the hunters of the band back to the encampment their chief had neglected none of the customary precautions of Indian prudence, in order that his trail might escape the eye of the enemies. It would seem, however, that the Pawnees had not only made the dangerous discovery, but had managed with great art to draw nigh the place by the only side on which it was thought unnecessary to guard the approaches with the usual line of sentinels. The latter, who were scattered along the different little eminences which lay in the rear of the lodges, were among the last to be apprised of the danger.

In such a crisis there was little time for deliberation. It was by exhibiting the

force of his character in scenes of similar difficulty that Mahtoree had obtained and strengthened his ascendancy among his people, nor did he seem likely to lose it by the manifestation of any indecision on the present occasion. In the midst of the screams of the young, the shrieks of the women, and the wild howlings of the crones, which were sufficient of themselves to have created a chaos in the thoughts of one less accustomed to act in emergencies, he promptly asserted his authority, issuing his orders with the coolness of a veteran.

While the warriors were arming, the boys were dispatched to the bottom for the horses. The tents were hastily struck by the women, and disposed of on such of the beasts as were not fit to be trusted in combat. The infants were cast upon the backs of their mothers; and those children who were of a size to march were driven to the rear, like a herd of less reasoning animals. Though these several movements were made amid outcries and a clamor that likened the place to another Babel, they were executed with incredible alacrity and intelligence.

In the meantime, Mahtoree neglected no duty that belonged to his responsible station. From the elevation on which he stood, he could command a perfect view of the force and evolutions of the hostile party. A grim smile lighted his visage when he found that, in point of numbers, his own band was greatly superior. Notwithstanding this great advantage, however, there were other points of inequality, which would probably have a tendency to render his success in the approaching conflict exceedingly doubtful. His people were the inhabitants of a more northern and less hospitable region than their enemies, and were far from being rich in that species of property, horses and arms, which constitutes the most highly prized wealth of a Western Indian. The band in view was mounted to a man; and, as it had come so far to rescue, or to revenge, their greatest partisan, he had no reason to doubt its being composed entirely of braves. On the other hand, many of his followers were far better in a hunt than in a com-

bat; men who might serve to divert the attention of his foes, but from whom he could expect little desperate service. Still, his flashing eye glanced over a body of warriors on whom he had often relied, and who had never deceived him; and though, in the precise position in which he found himself, he felt no disposition to precipitate the conflict, he certainly would have had no intention to avoid it, had not the presence of his women and children placed the option altogether in the power of his adversaries.

On the other hand, the Pawnees, so unexpectedly successful in their first and greatest object, manifested no intention to drive matters to an issue. The river was a dangerous barrier to pass, in the face of a determined foe, and it would now have been in perfect accordance with their cautious policy to have retired for a season, in order that their onset might be made in the hours of darkness and of seeming security. But there was a spirit in their chief that elevated him, for the moment, above the ordinary expedients of savage warfare. His bosom burned with the desire to wipe out that disgrace of which he had been the subject; and it is possible that he believed the retiring camp of the Sioux contained a prize that began to have a value in his eyes far exceeding any that could be found in fifty Teton scalps. Let that be as it might, Hard-Heart had no sooner received the brief congratulations of his band, and communicated to the chiefs such facts as were important to be known, than he prepared himself to act such a part in the coming conflict as would at once maintain his well-earned reputation and gratify his secret wishes. A led horse, one that had been long trained in the hunts, had been brought to receive his master, with but little hope that his services would ever be needed again in this life. With a delicacy and consideration that proved how much the generous qualities of the youth had touched the feelings of his people, a bow, a lance, and a quiver were thrown across the animal, which it had been intended to immolate on the grave of the young brave; a species of care that would have superseded

the necessity for the pious duty that the trapper had pledged himself to perform.

Though Hard-Heart was sensible of the kindness of his warriors, and believed that a chief, furnished with such appointments, might depart with credit for the distant hunting-grounds of the Master of Life, he seemed equally disposed to think that they might be rendered quite as useful in the actual state of things. His countenance lighted with stern pleasure as he tried the elasticity of the bow, and poised the well-balanced spear. The glance he bestowed on the shield was more cursory and indifferent; but the exultation with which he threw himself on the back of his favorite war-horse was so great as to break through the forms of Indian reserve. He rode to and fro among his scarcely less delighted warriors, managing the animal with a grace and address which no artificial rules can ever supply; at times flourishing his lance, as if to assure himself of his seat, and at others examining critically into the condition of the fusee, with which he had also been furnished, with the fondness of one who was miraculously restored to the possession of treasures that constituted his pride and his happiness.

At this particular moment, Mahtoree, having completed the necessary arrangements, prepared to make a more decisive movement. The Teton had found no little embarrassment in disposing of his captives. The tents of the squatter were still in sight, and his wary cunning did not fail to apprise him that it was quite as necessary to guard against an attack from that quarter as to watch the motions of his more open and more active foes. His first impulse had been to make the tomahawk suffice for the men, and to trust the females under the same protection as the women of his band; but the manner in which many of his braves continued to regard the imaginary medicine of the Long-knives, forewarned him of the danger of so hazardous an experiment on the eve of a battle. It might be deemed the omen of defeat. In this dilemma he motioned to a superannuated

warrior, to whom he had confided the charge of the non-combatants, and leading him apart, he placed a finger significantly on his shoulder, as he said, in a tone in which authority was tempered by confidence:

"When my young men are striking the Pawnees, give the women knives. Enough; my father is very old; he does not want to hear wisdom from a boy."

The grim old savage returned a look of ferocious assent, and then the mind of the chief appeared to be at rest on this important subject. From that moment he bestowed all his care on the achievement of his revenge, and the maintenance of his martial character. Throwing himself on his horse, he made a sign, with the air of a prince, to his followers to imitate his example, interrupting, without ceremony, the war-songs and solemn rites by which many among them were stimulating their spirits to deeds of daring. When all were in order, the whole moved with great steadiness and silence toward the margin of the river.

The hostile bands were now separated by the water. The width of the stream was too great to admit of the use of the ordinary Indian missiles, but a few useless shots were exchanged from the fuses of the chiefs, more in bravado than with any expectation of doing execution. As some time was suffered to elapse in demonstrations and abortive efforts, we shall leave them, for that period, to return to such of our characters as remained in the hands of the savages.

We have shed much ink in vain, and wasted quires, that might possibly have been better employed, if it be necessary now to tell the reader that few of the foregoing movements escaped the observation of the experienced trapper. He had been, in common with the rest, astonished at the sudden act of Hard-Heart; and there was a single moment when a feeling of regret and mortification got the better of his longings to save the life of the youth. The simple and well-intentioned old man would have felt at witnessing any failure of firmness on the part of a warrior who had so strongly excited his sympathies,

the same species of sorrow that a Christian parent would suffer in hanging over the dying moments of an impious child. But when, instead of an impotent and unmanly struggle for existence, he found that his friend had forborne, with the customary and dignified submission of an Indian warrior, until an opportunity had offered to escape, and that he had then manifested the spirit and decision of the most gifted brave, his gratification became nearly too powerful to be concealed. In the midst of the wailing and commotion which succeeded the death of Weucha and the escape of the captive, he placed himself nigh the persons of his white associates, with a determination of interfering, at every hazard, should the fury of the savages take that direction. The appearance of the hostile band spared him, however, so desperate and probably so fruitless an effort, and left him to pursue his observations and to mature his plans more at leisure.

He particularly remarked that, while by far the greater part of the women, and all the children, together with the effects of the party, were hurried to the rear, probably with an order to secrete themselves in some of the adjacent woods, the tent of Mahtoree himself was left standing, and its contents undisturbed. Two chosen horses, however, stood near by, held by a couple of youths, who were too young to go into conflict, and yet of an age to understand the management of the beasts. The trapper perceived in this arrangement the reluctance of Mahtoree to trust his newly found "flowers" beyond the reach of his eye; and, at the same time, his forethought, in providing against a reverse of fortune. Neither had the manner of the Teton, in giving his commission to the old savage, nor the fierce pleasure with which the latter had received the bloody charge, escaped his observation. From all these mysterious movements, the old man was aware that a crisis was at hand, and he summoned the utmost knowledge he had acquired, in so long a life, to aid him in the desperate conjuncture. While musing on the means to be employed, the doctor again attracted his

attention to himself by a piteous appeal for assistance.

"Venerable trapper, or, as I might say, liberator," commenced the dolorous Obed, "it would seem that a fitting time has at length arrived to dis sever the unnatural and altogether irregular connection which exists between my inferior members and the body of Asinus. Perhaps if such a portion of my limbs were released as might leave me master of the remainder, and this favorable opportunity were suitably improved, by making a forced march toward the settlements, all hopes of preserving the treasures of knowledge, of which I am the unworthy receptacle, would not be lost. The importance of the results is surely worth the hazard of the experiment."

"I know not, I know not," returned the deliberate old man; "the vermin and reptiles, which you bear about you, were intended by the Lord for the prairies, and I see no good in sending them into regions that may not suit their nature's. And, moreover, you may be of great and particular use as you now sit on the ass, though it creates no wonder in my mind to perceive that you are ignorant of it, seeing that usefulness is altogether a new calling to so bookish a man."

"Of what service can I be in this painful thralldom, in which the animal functions are in a manner suspended, and the spiritual or intellectual blinded by the secret sympathy that unites mind to matter? There is likely to be blood spilt between yonder adverse hosts of heathens; and, though but little desiring the office, it would be better that I should employ myself in surgical experiments than in thus wasting the precious moments, mortifying both soul and body."

"It is little that a red-skin would care to have a physician to his hurts, while the whoop is ringing in his ears. Patience is a virtue in an Indian, and can be no shame to a Christian white man. Look at these hags of squaws, friend doctor; I have no judgment in savage tempers, if they are not bloody-minded, and ready to work their accursed pleasures on us all. Now, so long as you keep upon the ass, and

maintain the fierce look which is so far from being your natural gift, fear of so great a medicine may serve to keep down their courage. I am placed here, like a general at the opening of the battle, and it has become my duty to make such use of all my force as, in my judgment, each is best fitted to perform. If I know these niceties, you will be more serviceable for your countenance just now than in any more stirring exploits."

"Harkee, old trapper," shouted Paul, whose patience could no longer maintain itself under the calculating and prolix explanations of the other, "suppose you cut two things I can name, short off? That is to say, your conversation, which is agreeable enough over a well-baked buffalo's hump, and these damnable thongs of hide, which, according to my experience, can be pleasant nowhere. A single stroke of your knife would be of more service, just now, than the longest speech that was ever made in a Kentucky court-house."

"Ay, court-houses are the 'happy hunting-grounds,' as a red-skin would say, for them that are born with gifts no better than such as lie in the tongue. I was carried into one of the lawless holes myself once, and it was all about a thing of no more value than the skin of a deer. The Lord forgive them!—the Lord forgive them!—they knew no better, and they did according to their weak judgments; and therefore the more are they to be pitied; and yet it was a solemn sight to see an aged man, who had always lived in the air, laid neck and heels by the law, and held up as a spectacle for the women and boys of a wasteful settlement to point their fingers at!"

"If such be your opinions of confinement, honest friend, you had better manifest the same by putting us at liberty with as little delay as possible," said Middleton, who, like his companion, began to find the tardiness of his often-tried companion quite as extraordinary as it was disagreeable.

"I should greatly like to do the same; especially in your behalf, captain, who, being a soldier, might find not only

pleasure but profit in examining, more at your ease, into the circumventions and cunning of an Indian fight. As to our friend here, it is of but little matter how much of this affair he examines, or how little, seeing that a bee is not to be overcome in the same manner as an Indian."

"Old man, this trifling with our misery is inconsiderate, to give it a name no harsher——"

"Ay, your gran'ther was of a hot and hurrying mind, and one must not expect that the young of the panther will crawl the 'arth like the litter of a porcupine. Now, keep you both silent, and what I say shall have the appearance of being spoken concerning the movements that are going on in the bottom; all of which will serve to put jealousy to sleep, and to shut the eyes of such as rarely close them on wickedness and cruelty. In the first place, then, you must know that I have reason to think yonder treacherous Teton has left an order to put us all to death, so soon as he thinks the deed may be done secretly, and without tumult."

"Great Heaven! will you suffer us to be butchered like unresisting sheep?"

"Hist, captain, hist! a hot temper is none of the best, when cunning is more needed than blows. Ah, the Pawnee is a noble boy! it would do your heart good to see how he draws off from the river, in order to invite his enemies to cross; and yet, according to my failing sight, they count two warriors to his one!—But, as I was saying, little good comes of haste and thoughtlessness. The facts are so plain that any child may see their wisdom. The savages are of many minds as to the manner of our treatment. Some fear us for our color, and would gladly let us go, and other some would show us the mercy that the doe receives from the hungry wolf. When opposition gets fairly into the councils of a tribe, it is rare that humanity is the gainer. Now, see you these wrinkled and cruel-minded squaws—no, you cannot see them as you lie, but nevertheless they are here, ready and willing, like so many raging she-bears, to work their will, like so many raging she-bears,

to work their will upon us so soon as the proper time shall come."

"Harkee, old gentleman trapper," interrupted Paul, with a little bitterness in his manner; "do you tell us these matters for our amusement or for your own? If for ours, you may keep your breath for the next race you run, as I am tickled nearly to suffocation already with my part of the fun."

"Hist!" said the trapper, cutting with great dexterity and rapidity the thong which bound one of the arms of Paul to his body, and dropping his knife at the same time within reach of the liberated hand. "Hist, boy, hist! that was a lucky moment! The yell from the bottom drew the eyes of these blood-suckers in another quarter and so far we are safe. Now make a proper use of your advantages; but be careful that what you do is done without being seen."

"Thank you for this small favor, old deliberation," muttered the bee-hunter, "though it comes like a snow in May, somewhat out of season."

"Foolish boy!" reproachfully exclaimed the other, who had moved to a little distance from his friends, and appeared to be attentively regarding the movements of the hostile parties, "will you never learn to know the wisdom of patience? And you, too, captain; though a man myself that seldom ruffles his temper by vain feelings, I see that you are silent because you scorn to ask favors any longer from one you think too slow to grant them. No doubt ye are both young, and filled with pride of your strength and manhood, and I dare say you thought it only needful to cut the thongs to leave you masters of the ground. But he that has seen much is apt to think much. Had I run like a bustling woman to have given you freedom, these hags of the Sioux would have seen the same, and then where would you both have found yourselves? Under the tomahawk and the knife, like helpless and out-crying children, though gifted with the size and beards of men. Ask our friend, the bee-hunter, in what condition he finds himself to struggle with a Teton boy after so many hours of bond-

age; much less with a dozen merciless and bloodthirsty squaws!"

"Truly, old trapper," returned Paul, stretching his limbs, which were by this time entirely released, and endeavoring to restore the suspended circulation, "you have some judgmental notions in these matters. Now here am I, Paul Hower, a man who will give in to few at wrestle or race, nearly as helpless as the day I paid my first visit to the house of old Paul, who is dead and gone—the Lord forgive him any little blunders he may have made while he tarried in Kentucky! Now there is my foot on the ground, so far as eyesight has any virtue, and yet it would take no great temptation to make me swear it didn't touch the earth by six inches. I say, honest friend, since you have done so much, have the goodness to keep these damnable squaws, of whom you say so many interesting things, at a little distance till I have got the blood of this arm in motion and am ready to receive them."

The trapper made a sign that he perfectly understood the case, and he walked toward the superannuated savage, who began to manifest an intention of commencing his assigned task, leaving the bee-hunter to recover the use of his limbs as well as he could, and to put Middleton in a similar situation to defend himself.

Mahtoree had not mistaken his man in selecting the one he did to execute his bloody purpose. He had chosen one of those ruthless savages, more or less of whom are to be found in every tribe, who had purchased a certain share of military reputation by the exhibition of hardihood that found its impulses in an innate love of cruelty. Contrary to the high and chivalrous sentiment which among the Indians of the prairies renders it a deed of even greater merit to bear off the trophy of victory from a fallen foe than to slay him, he had been remarkable for preferring the pleasure of destroying life to the glory of striking the dead. While the more self-devoted and ambitious braves were intent on personal honor, he had always been seen, established behind some favorable cover, depriving the wounded of

hope, by finishing that which a more gallant warrior had begun. In all the cruelties of the tribe he had ever been foremost; and no Sioux was so uniformly found on the side of merciless counsels.

He had awaited with an impatience which his long-practiced restraint could with difficulty subdue for the moment to arrive when he might proceed to execute the wishes of the great chief, without whose approbation and powerful protection he would not have dared to undertake a step that had so many opposers in the nation. But events had been hastening to an issue between the hostile parties; and the time had now arrived, greatly to his secret and malignant joy, when he was free to act his will.

The trapper found him distributing knives to the ferocious hags, who received the presents, chanting a low, monotonous song, that recalled the losses of their people in various conflicts with the whites, and which extolled the pleasures and glory of revenge. The appearance of such a group was enough of itself to have deterred one less accustomed to such sights than the old man from trusting himself within the circle of their wild and repulsive rites.

Each of the crones, as she received the weapon, commenced a slow and measured, but ungainly step, around the savage, until the whole were circling him in a sort of magic dance. The movements were timed in some degree by the words of their songs, as were their gestures by the ideas. When they spoke of their own losses, they tossed their long, straight locks of gray into the air, or suffered them to fall in confusion upon their withered necks; but, as the sweetness of returning blow for blow was touched upon by any among them, it was answered by a common howl as well as by gestures that were sufficiently expressive of the manner in which they were exciting themselves to the necessary state of fury.

Into the very center of the ring of seeming demons the trapper now stalked, with the same calmness and observation as he would have walked into a village church. No other change was made by

his appearance than a renewal of the threatening gestures, with, if possible, a still less equivocal display of their remorseless intentions. Making a sign for them to cease, the old man demanded:

"Why do the mothers of the Tetons sing with bitter tongues? The Pawnee prisoners are not yet in their village; their young men have not come back loaded with scalps!"

He was answered by a general howl, and a few of the boldest of the furies even ventured to approach him, flourishing their knives within a dangerous proximity of his own steady eye-balls.

"It is a warrior you see, and no runner of the Long-knives, whose face grows pale at the sight of a tomahawk," returned the trapper, without moving a muscle. "Let the Sioux women think; if one white-skin dies, a hundred spring up where he falls."

Still the hags made no other answer than by increasing their speed in the circle, and occasionally raising the threatening expressions of their chant into louder and more intelligible strains. Suddenly one of the oldest and the most ferocious of them all broke out of the ring and skirred away in the direction of her victims, like a rapacious bird that, having wheeled on poised wings for the time necessary to insure its object, makes the final dart upon its prey. The others followed, a disorderly and screaming flock, fearful of being too late to reap their portion of the sanguinary pleasure.

"Mighty medicine of my people!" shouted the old man, in the Teton tongue; "lift your voice and speak, that the Sioux nation may hear."

Whether Asinus had acquired so much knowledge by his recent experience as to know the value of his sonorous properties, or the strange spectacle of a dozen hags flitting past him, filling the air with such sounds as were even grating to the ears of an ass, most moved his temper, it is certain that the animal did that which Obed was requested to do, and probably with far greater effect than if the naturalist had striven with his mightiest effort to be heard. It was the first time the strange beast had spoken, since his arrival in the

encampment. Admonished by so terrible a warning, the hags scattered themselves like vultures frightened from their prey, still screaming, and but half diverted from their purpose.

In the meantime the sudden appearance, and the imminency of the danger, quickened the blood in the veins of Paul and Middleton, more than all their laborious frictions and physical expedients. The former had actually risen to his feet, and assumed an attitude which perhaps threatened more than the bee-hunter was able to perform, and even the latter had mounted to his knees, and shown a disposition to do good service for his life. The unaccountable release of the captives from their bonds was attributed by the hags to the incantations of the medicine; and the mistake was probably of as much service as the miraculous and timely interposition of Asinus in their favor.

"Now is the time to come out of our ambushment," exclaimed the old man, hastening to join his friends, "and to make open and manful war. It would have been policy to have kept back the struggle until the captain was in better condition to join, but as we have unmasked our battery, why, we must maintain the ground——"

He was interrupted by feeling a gigantic hand on his shoulder. Turning, under a sort of confused impression that necromancy was actually abroad in the place, he found that he was in the hands of a sorcerer no less dangerous and powerful than Ishmael Bush. The file of the squatter's well-armed sons, that was seen issuing from behind the still standing tent of Mahtoree, explained at once not only the manner in which their rear had been turned, while their attention had been so earnestly bestowed on matters in front, but the utter impossibility of resistance.

Neither Ishmael nor his sons deemed it necessary to enter into prolix explanations. Middleton and Paul were bound again, with extraordinary silence and dispatch, and this time not even the aged trapper was exempt from a similar fortune. The tent was struck, the females placed upon the horses, and the whole

were on the way toward the squatter's encampment with a celerity that might well have served to keep alive the idea of magic.

During this summary and brief disposition of things, the disappointed agent of Mahtoree and his callous associates were seen flying across the plain, in the direction of the retiring families; and when Ishmael left the spot with his prisoners and his booty, the ground which had so lately been alive with the bustle and life of an extensive Indian encampment was as still and empty as any other spot in those extensive wastes.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Is this proceeding just and honorable?"

—SHAKESPEARE.

DURING the occurrence of these events on the upland plain, the warriors on the bottom had not been idle. We left the adverse bands watching one another on the opposite banks of the stream, each endeavoring to exite its enemy to some act of indiscretion, by the most reproachful taunts and revilings. But the Pawnee chief was not slow to discover that his crafty antagonist had no objection to waste the time so idly, and, as they mutually proved, in expedients that were so entirely useless. He changed his plans accordingly, and withdrew from the bank, as has been already explained through the mouth of the trapper, in order to invite the more numerous host of the Sioux to cross. The challenge was not accepted, and the Loups were compelled to frame some other method to attain their end.

Instead of any longer throwing away the precious moments in fruitless endeavors to induce his foe to cross the stream, the young partisan of the Pawnees led his troops, at a swift gallop, along its margin in quest of some favorable spot where by a sudden push he might throw his own band, without loss, to the opposite shore. The instant his object was discovered, each mounted Teton received a footman behind him, and Mahtoree was still enabled to concentrate his whole force against

the effort. Perceiving that his design was anticipated, and unwilling to blow his horses by a race that would disqualify them for service, even after they had succeeded in outstripping the more heavily burdened cattle of the Sioux, Hard-Heart drew up, and came to a dead halt on the very margin of the water-course.

As the country was too open for any of the usual devices of savage warfare, and time was so pressing, the chivalrous Pawnee resolved to bring on the result by one of those acts of personal daring for which the Indian braves are so remarkable, and by which they often purchase their highest and dearest renown. The spot he had selected was favorable to such a project. The river, which throughout most of its course was deep and rapid, had expanded there to more than twice its customary width, and the rippling of its waters proved that it flowed over a shallow bottom. In the center of the current there was an extensive and naked bed of sand, but a little raised above the level of the stream, and of a color and consistency which warranted, to a practiced eye, that it afforded a firm and safe foundation for the foot. To this spot the partisan now turned his wistful gaze, nor was he long in making his decision. First speaking to his warriors and apprising them of his intentions, he dashed into the current, and partly by swimming, and more by the use of his horse's feet, he reached the island in safety.

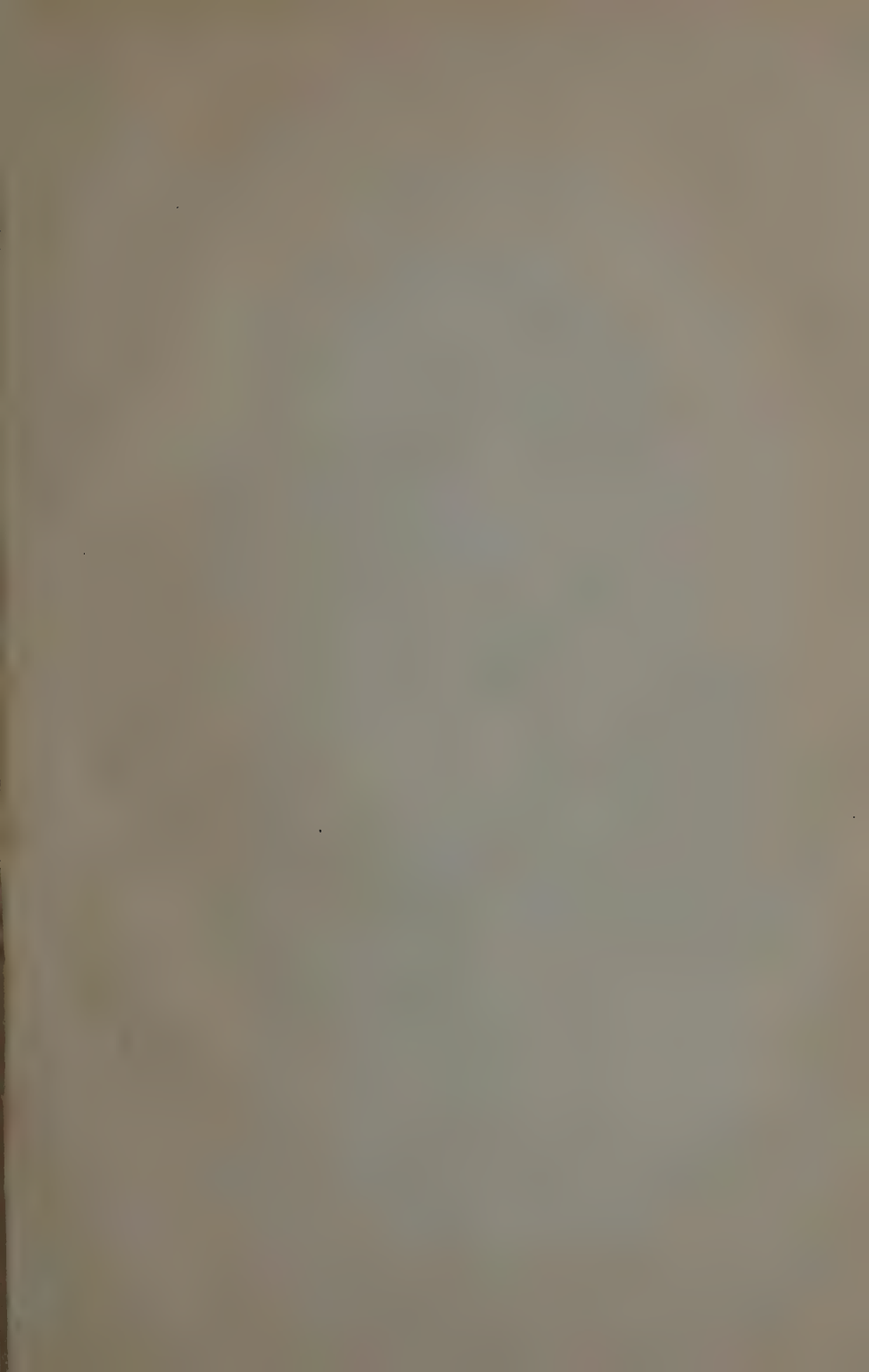
The experience of Hard-Heart had not deceived him. When his snorting steed issued from the water, he found himself on a tremendous but damp and compact bed of sand, that was admirably adapted to the exhibition of the finest powers of the animal. The horse seemed conscious of the advantage, and bore his warlike rider with an elasticity of step and a loftiness of air that would have done no discredit to the highest-trained and most generous charger. The blood of the chief himself quickened with the excitement of his situation. He sat the beast as if conscious that the eyes of two tribes were on his movements; and as nothing could be more acceptable and grateful to his own

band than this display of native grace and courage, so nothing could be more taunting and humiliating to their enemies.

The sudden appearance of the Pawnee on the sands was announced among the Tetons by a general yell of savage anger. A rush was made to the shore, followed by a discharge of fifty arrows and a few fuses, and, on the part of several braves there was a plain manifestation of a desire to plunge into the water in order to punish the temerity of their insolent foe. But a call and a mandate from Mahtoree checked the rising and nearly ungovernable temper of his band. So far from allowing a single foot to be wet, or a repetition of the fruitless efforts of his people to drive away their foe with missiles, the whole of the party was commanded to retire from the shore, while he himself communicated his intentions to one or two of his most favored followers.

When the Pawnees observed the rush of their enemies, twenty warriors rode into the stream; but so soon as they perceived that the Tetons had withdrawn, they fell back to a man, leaving the young chief to the support of his own often-tried skill and well-established courage. The instructions of Hard-Heart on quitting his band had been worthy of the self-devotion and daring of his character. So long as single warriors came against him he was to be left to the keeping of the Wabcondah and his own arm; but, should the Sioux attack him in numbers, he was to be sustained man for man, even to the extent of his whole force. These generous orders were strictly obeyed; and, though so many hearts in the troop panted to share in the glory and danger of their partisan, not a warrior was found among them all who did not know how to conceal his impatience under the usual mask of Indian self-restraint. They watched the issue with quick and jealous eyes, nor did a single exclamation of surprise escape them when they saw, as will soon be apparent, that the experiment of their chief was as likely to conduce to peace as to war.

Mahtoree was not long in communicating his plans to his confidants, whom he





A series of masterly and rapid evolutions with the horses now commenced. The wheelings, the charges, the advances and the circuitous retreats, were like the flights of circling swallows.—*The Prairie.*

as quickly dismissed to join their fellows in the rear. The Teton entered a short distance into the stream and halted. Here he raised his hands several times, with the palms outward, and made several of those other signs which are construed into a pledge of amicable intentions among the inhabitants of those regions. Then, as if to confirm the sincerity of his faith, he cast his fusee to the shore and waded deeper into the water, where he again came to a stand in order to see in what manner the Pawnee would receive his pledge of peace.

The crafty Sioux had not made his calculations on the noble and honest nature of his more youthful rival in vain. Hard-Heart had continued galloping across the sands during the discharge of missiles and the appearance of general onset, with the same proud and confident mien as that with which he had first braved the danger. When he saw the well-known person of the Teton partisan enter the river, he waved his hand in triumph, and flourishing his lance he raised the thrilling war-cry of his people as a challenge for him to come on. But when he saw the signs of a truce, though deeply practiced in the treachery of savage combat, he disdained to show a less manly reliance on himself than that which his enemy had seen fit to exhibit. Riding to the farthest extremity of the sands he cast his own fusee from him, and returned to the point whence he had started.

The two chiefs were now armed alike. Each had his spear, his bow, his quiver, his little battle-ax, and his knife; and each had also a shield of hides, which might even serve as a means of defense against a surprise from any of these weapons. The Sioux no longer hesitated, but advanced deeper into the stream, and soon landed on a point of the island which his courteous adversary had left free for that purpose. Had one been there to watch the countenance of Mahtoree as he crossed the water that separated him from the most formidable and the most hated of all his rivals, he might have fancied that he could trace the gleamings of a secret joy breaking through the cloud which deep cunning and heart-

less treachery had drawn before his swarthy visage; and yet there would have been moments when he might have believed that the flashings of the Teton's eye and the expansion of his nostrils had their origin in a nobler sentiment and one more worthy of an Indian chief.

The Pawnee awaited the time of his enemy with calmness and dignity. The Teton made a short turn or two to curb the impatience of his steed and to recover his seat after the effort of crossing, and then he rode into the center of the place and invited the other, by a courteous gesture, to approach. Hard-Heart drew nigh until he found himself at a distance equally suited to advance or to retreat, and, in his turn, he came to a stand, keeping his glowing eye riveted on that of his enemy. A long and grave pause succeeded this movement, during which these two distinguished braves, who were now for the first time confronted with arms in their hands, sat regarding each other like warriors who knew how to value the merits of a gallant foe, however hated. But the mien of Mahtoree was far less stern and warlike than that of the partisan of the Loups. Throwing his shield over his shoulder, as if to invite the confidence of the other, he made a gesture of salutation, and was the first to speak.

"Let the Pawnees go upon the hills," he said, "and look from the morning to the evening sun, from the country of snows to the land of many flowers, and they will see that the earth is very large. Why cannot the red-men find room on it for all their villages?"

"Has the Teton ever known a warrior of the Loups come to his towns to beg a place for his lodge?" returned the young brave, with a look in which pride and contempt were not attempted to be concealed; "when the Pawnees hunt do they send runners to ask Mahtoree if there are no Sioux on the prairies?"

"When there is hunger in the lodge of a warrior, he looks for the buffalo, which is given him for food," the Teton continued, struggling to keep down the ire excited by the other's scorn. "The Wahcondah has made more of them than he

has made Indians. He has not said; 'This buffalo shall be for a Pawnee, and that for a Dahcotah; this beaver for a Konza, and that for an Omahaw.' No; he said, 'There are enough. I love my red children, and I have given them great riches. The swiftest horse shall not go from the villages of the Tetons to the villages of the Loups in many suns. It is far from the towns of the Pawnees to the river of the Osages. There is room for all that I love. Why, then, should a red-man strike his brother?'

Hard-Heart dropped one end of his lance to the earth, and, having also cast his shield across his shoulder, he sat leaning lightly on the weapon, as he answered with a smile of no doubtful expression:

"Are the Tetons weary of the hunts and of the war-path? Do they wish to cook the venison and not to kill it? Do they intend to let the hair cover their heads, that their enemies shall not know where to find their scalps? Go; a Pawnee warrior will never come among Sioux squaws for a wife!"

A frightful gleam of ferocity broke out of the restraint of the Dahcotah's countenance, as he listened to this biting insult; but he was quick in subduing the tell-tale feeling, in an expression much better suited to his present purpose.

"This is the way a young chief should talk of war," he answered, with singular composure; "but Mahtoree has seen the misery of more winters than his brother. When the nights have been long, and darkness has been in his lodge, while the young men slept, he has thought of the hardships of his people. He has said to himself, 'Teton, count the scalps in your smoke. They are all red but two! Does the wolf destroy the wolf, or the rattler strike his brother? You know they do not; therefore, Teton, are you wrong to go on a path that leads to the village of a red-skin, with a tomahawk in your hand.'"

"The Sioux would rob the warrior of his fame! He would say to his young men, 'Go, dig roots in the prairies, and find holes to bury your tomahawks in; you are no longer braves!'"

"If the tongue of Mahtoree ever says thus," returned the crafty chief, with an appearance of strong indignation, "let his women cut it out, and burn it with the offals of the buffalo. No," he added, advancing a few feet nigher to the immovable Hard-Heart, as if in the sincerity of confidence; "the red-man can never want an enemy: they are plentier than the leaves on the trees, the birds in the heavens, or the buffaloes on the prairies. Let my brother open his eyes wide: does he nowhere see an enemy he would strike?"

"How long is it since the Teton counted the scalps of his warriors, that were drying in the smoke of a Pawnee lodge? the hand that took them is here, and ready to make eighteen, twenty."

"Now, let not the mind of my brother go on a crooked path. If a red-skin strikes a red-skin forever, who will be masters of the prairies, when no warriors are left to say, 'They are mine?' Hear the voices of the old men. They tell us that in their days many Indians have come out of the woods under the rising sun, and they have filled the prairies with their complaints of the robberies of the Long-knives. Where a pale-face comes, a red-man cannot stay. The land is too small. They are always hungry. See, here they are already!"

As the Teton spoke, he pointed toward the tents of Ishmael, which were in plain sight, and then he paused, to await the effect of his words on the mind of his ingenuous foe. Hard-Heart listened like one in whom a train of novel ideas had been excited by the reasoning of the other. He mused for a minute before he demanded:

"What does the wise chief of the Sioux say must be done?"

"They think that the moccasin of every pale-face should be followed like the track of a bear. That the Long-knife who comes upon the prairie should never go back. That the path shall be open to those who come, and shut to those who go. Yonder are many. They have horses and guns. They are rich, but we are poor. Will the Pawnees meet the Tetons in council? and when the sun is gone behind the Rocky Mountains, they will

say, 'This is for a Loup and this for a Sioux.'"

"Teton—no! Hard-Heart has never struck the stranger. They come into his lodge and eat, and they go out in safety. A mighty chief is their friend! When my people call the young men to go on the war-path, the moccasin of Hard-Heart is the last. But his village is no sooner hid by the trees than it is the first. No, Teton; his arm will never be lifted against the stranger."

"Fool; die with empty hands!" Mahtoree exclaimed, setting an arrow to his bow, and sending it, with a sudden and deadly aim, full at the naked bosom of his generous and confiding enemy.

The action of the treacherous Teton was too quick and too well-matured to admit of any of the ordinary means of defense on the part of the Pawnee. His shield was hanging at his shoulder, and even the arrow had been suffered to fall from its place, and lay in the hollow of the hand which grasped the bow. But the quick eye of the brave had time to see the movement, and his ready thoughts did not desert him. Pulling hard and with a jerk upon the rein, his steed reared his forward legs into the air, and, as the rider bent his body low, the horse served for a shield against the danger. So true, however, was the aim, and so powerful the force by which it was sent, that the arrow entered the neck of the animal, and broke the skin on the opposite side.

Quicker than thought Hard-Heart sent back an answering arrow. The shield of the Teton was transfixed, but his person was untouched. For a few moments the twang of the bow and the glancing of arrows were incessant, notwithstanding the combatants were compelled to give so large a portion of their care to the means of defense. The quivers were soon exhausted; and, though blood had been drawn, it was not in sufficient quantities to impair the energy of the combat.

A series of masterly and rapid evolutions with the horses now commenced. The wheelings, the charges, the advances, and the circuitous retreats, were like the flights of circling swallows. Blows were

struck with the lance, the sand was scattered in the air, and the shocks often seemed to be unavoidably fatal; but still each party kept his seat, and still each rein was managed with a steady hand. At length the Teton was driven to the necessity of throwing himself from his horse to escape a thrust that would otherwise have proved fatal. The Pawnee passed his lance through the beast, uttering a shout of triumph as he galloped by. Turning in his tracks, he was about to push the advantage, when his own mettled steed staggered and fell, under a burden that he could no longer sustain. Mahtoree answered his premature cry of victory, and rushed upon the entangled youth with knife and tomahawk. The utmost agility of Hard-Heart had not sufficed to extricate himself in season from the fallen beast. He saw that his case was desperate. Feeling for his knife, he took the blade between a finger and thumb, and cast it with admirable coolness at his advancing foe. The keen weapon whirled a few times in the air, and its point meeting the naked breast of the impetuous Sioux, the blade was buried to the buck-horn haft.

Mahtoree laid his hand on the weapon, and seemed to hesitate whether to withdraw it or not. For a moment his countenance darkened with the most inextinguishable hatred and ferocity, and then, as if inwardly admonished how little time he had to lose, he staggered to the edge of the sands, and halted with his feet in the water. The cunning and duplicity which had so long obscured the brighter and nobler traits of his character were lost in the never-dying sentiment of pride, which he had imbibed in youth.

"Boy of the Loups!" he said, with a smile of grim satisfaction, "the scalp of a mighty Dahcotah shall never dry in Pawnee smoke!"

Drawing the knife from the wound, he hurled it toward the enemy in disdain. Then shaking his arm at his successful foe, his swarthy countenance appearing to struggle with volumes of scorn and hatred, that he could not utter with the tongue, he cast himself headlong into one of the

most rapid veins of the current, his hand still waving in triumph above the fluid, even after his body had sunk into the tide forever. Hard-Heart was by this time free. The silence, which had hitherto reigned in the bands, was suddenly broken by general and tumultuous shouts. Fifty of the adverse warriors were already in the river, hastening to destroy or to defend the conqueror, and the combat was rather on the eve of its commencement than near its termination. But to all these signs of danger and need the young victor was insensible. He sprang for the knife, and bounded with the foot of an antelope along the sands, looking for the receding fluid which concealed his prize. A dark, bloody spot indicated the place, and, armed with the knife, he plunged into the stream, resolute to die in the flood, or to return with his trophy.

In the meantime the sands became a scene of bloodshed and violence. Better mounted and perhaps more ardent, the Pawnees had, however, reached the spot in sufficient numbers to force their enemies to retire. The victors pushed their success to the opposite shore, and gained the solid ground in the *mêlée* of the fight. Here they were met by all the unmounted Tetons, and in their turn they were forced to give way.

The combat now became more characteristic and circumspect. As the hot impulses which had driven both parties to mingle in so deadly a struggle began to cool, the chiefs were enabled to exercise their influence and to temper the assaults with prudence. In consequence of the admonitions of their leaders, the Sioux sought such covers as the grass afforded, or here and there some bush or slight inequality of the ground, and the charges of the Pawnee warriors necessarily became more wary, and of course less fatal.

In this manner the contest continued with a varied success, and without much loss. The Sioux had succeeded in forcing themselves into a thick growth of rank grass, where the horses of their enemies could not enter, or where, when entered, they were worse than useless. It became necessary to dislodge the Tetons from this

cover, or the object of the combat must be abandoned. Several desperate efforts had been repulsed, and the disheartened Pawnees were beginning to think of retreat, when the well-known war-cry of Hard-Heart was heard at hand, and at the next instant the chief appeared in their center, flourishing the scalp of the great Sioux, as a banner that would lead to victory.

He was greeted by a shout of delight, and followed into the cover with an impetuosity that, for the moment, drove all before it. But the bloody trophy in the hand of the partisan served as an incentive to the attacked, as well as to the assailants. Mahtoree had left many a daring brave behind him in his band, and the orator who in the debates of that day had manifested such pacific thoughts, now exhibited the most generous self-devotion, in order to wrest the memorial of a man he had never loved from the hands of the avowed enemies of his people.

The result was in favor of numbers. After a severe struggle, in which the finest displays of personal intrepidity were exhibited by all the chiefs, the Pawnees were compelled to retire upon the open bottom, closely pressed by the Sioux, who failed not to seize each foot of ground ceded by their enemies. Had the Tetons stayed their efforts on the margin of the grass, it is probable that the honor of the day would have been theirs, notwithstanding the irretrievable loss they had sustained in the death of Mahtoree. But the more reckless braves of the band were guilty of an indiscretion that entirely changed the fortunes of the fight, and suddenly stripped them of their hard-earned advantages.

A Pawnee chief had sunk under the numerous wounds he had received, and he fell, a target for a dozen arrows, in the very last group of his retiring party. Regardless alike of inflicting further injury on their foes, and of the temerity of the act, the Sioux braves bounded forward with a whoop, each man burning with the wish to reap the high renown of striking the body of the dead. They were met by Hard-Heart and a chosen knot of warriors, all of whom were just as stoutly

bent on saving the honor of their nation from so foul a stain. The struggle was hand to hand, and blood began to flow more freely. As the Pawnees retired with the body, the Sioux pressed upon their footsteps, and at length the whole of the latter broke out of the cover with a common yell, and threatened to bear down all opposition by sheer physical superiority.

The fate of Hard-Heart and his companions, all of whom would have died rather than relinquish their object, would have been quickly sealed but for a powerful and unlooked for interposition in their favor. A shout was heard from a little brake on the left, and a volley from the fatal Western rifle immediately succeeded. Some five or six Sioux leaped forward in the death agony, and every arm among them was as suddenly suspended as if the lightning had flashed from the clouds to aid the cause of the Loups. Then came Ishmael and his stout sons in open view, bearing down upon their late treacherous allies, with looks and voices that proclaimed the character of the succor.

The shock was too much for the fortitude of the Tetons. Several of their bravest chiefs had already fallen, and those that remained were instantly abandoned by the whole of the inferior herd. A few of the most desperate braves still lingered nigh the fatal symbol of their honor, and there nobly met their deaths, under the blows of the re-encouraged Pawnees. A second discharge from the rifles of the squatter and his party completed the victory.

The Sioux were now to be seen flying to more distant covers, with the same eagerness and desperation as, a few moments before, they had been plunging into the fight. The triumphant Pawnees bounded forward in chase, like so many high-blooded and well-trained hounds. On every side were heard the cries of victory or the yell of revenge. A few of the fugitives endeavored to bear away the bodies of the fallen warriors, but the hot pursuit quickly compelled them to abandon the slain, in order to preserve the living. Among all the struggles which were made

on that occasion, to guard the honor of the Sioux from the stain which their peculiar opinions attached to the possession of the scalp of a fallen brave, but one solitary instance of success occurred.

The opposition of a particular chief to the hostile proceedings in the councils of that morning has been already seen. But after having raised his voice in vain in support of peace, his arm was not backward in doing its duty in war. His prowess has been mentioned; and it was chiefly by his courage and example that the Tetons sustained themselves in the heroic manner they did, when the death of Mahtoree was known. This warrior, who, in the figurative language of his people, was called "the Swooping Eagle," had been the last to abandon the hopes of victory. When he found that the support of the dreaded rifle had robbed his band of the hard-earned advantages, he sullenly retired, amid a shower of missiles to the secret spot where he had hid his horse, in the mazes of the highest grass. Here he found a new and entirely unexpected competitor, ready to dispute with him for the possession of the beast. It was Bohrecheena, the aged friend of Mahtoree; he whose voice had been given in opposition to his own wiser opinions, transfixed with an arrow, and evidently suffering under the pangs of approaching death.

"I have been on my last war-path," said the grim old warrior, when he found that the real owner of the animal had come to claim his property; "shall a Pawnee carry the white hairs of a Sioux into his village, to be a scorn to his women and children?"

The other grasped his hand, answering to the appeal with a stern look of inflexible resolution. With this silent pledge, he assisted the wounded man to mount. So soon as he had led the horse to the margin of the cover, he threw himself also on its back, and, securing his companion to his belt, he issued on the open plain, trusting entirely to the well-known speed of the beast for their mutual safety. The Pawnees were not long in catching a view of these new objects, and several turned their steeds to pursue. The race continued for

a mile without a murmur from the sufferer, though, in addition to the agony of his body, he had the pain of seeing his enemies approach at every leap of their horses.

"Stop," he said, raising a feeble arm to check the speed of his companion; "the Eagle of my tribe must spread his wings wider. Let him carry the white hairs of an old warrior into the burnt-wood village!"

Few words were necessary between men who were governed by the same feelings of glory, and who were so well trained in the principles of their romantic honor. The Swooping Eagle threw himself from the back of the horse, and assisted the other to alight. The old man raised his tottering frame to its knees, and first casting a glance upward at the countenance of his countryman, as if to bid him adieu, he stretched out his neck to the blow he himself invited. A few strokes of the tomahawk, with a circling gash of the knife, sufficed to sever the head from the less-valued trunk. The Teton mounted again, just in season to escape a flight of arrows which came from his eager and disappointed pursuers. Flourishing the grim and bloody visage, he darted away from the spot with a shout of triumph, and was seen scouring the plains, as if he were actually borne along on the wings of the powerful bird from whose qualities he had received his flattering name. The Swooping Eagle reached his village in safety. He was one of the few Sioux who escaped from the massacre of that fatal day; and for a long time he alone of the saved was able to lift his voice in the councils of his nation with undiminished confidence.

The knife and the lance cut short the retreat of the larger portion of the vanquished. Even the retiring party of the women and children were scattered by the conquerors; and the sun had long sunk behind the rolling outline of the western horizon before the fell business of that disastrous defeat was entirely ended.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?"
—SHAKESPEARE.

THE day dawned the following morning on a more tranquil scene. The work of blood had entirely ceased; and, as the sun arose its light was shed on a broad expanse of quiet and solitude. The tents of Ishmael were still standing where they had been last seen, but not another vestige of human existence could be traced in any other part of the waste. Here and there little flocks of ravenous birds were sailing and screaming above those spots where some heavy-footed Teton had met his death, but every other sign of the recent combat had passed away. The river was to be traced far through the endless meadows by its serpentine and smoking bed; and the little silvery clouds of vapor, which hung above the pools and springs, were beginning to melt in air as they felt the quickening warmth, which, pouring from the glowing sky, shed its bland and subtle influence on every object of the vast and unshadowed region. The prairie was like the heavens after the passage of the gust—soft, calm, and soothing.

It was in the midst of such a scene that the family of the squatter assembled to make their final decision concerning the several individuals who had been thrown into their power by the fluctuating chances of the incidents related. Every being possessing life and liberty had been afoot, since the first streak of gray had lighted the east; and even the youngest of the erratic brood seemed conscious that the moment had arrived when circumstances were about to occur that might leave a lasting impression on the wild fortunes of their semi-barbarous condition.

Ishmael moved through his little encampment with the seriousness of one who had been unexpectedly charged with matters of a gravity exceeding any of the ordinary occurrences of his irregular existence. His sons, however, who had so often found occasions to prove the inexorable severity of their father's character, saw, in his sullen mien and cold eye, rather a determination to adhere to his

resolutions, which usually were as obstinately enforced as they were harshly conceived, than any evidences of wavering or doubt. Even Esther was sensibly affected by the important matters that pressed so heavily on the interests of her family. While she neglected none of those domestic offices which would probably have proceeded under any conceivable circumstances, just as the world turns round with earthquakes rending its crust and volcanoes consuming its vitals, yet her voice was pitched to a lower and more foreboding key than common, and the still frequent chidings of her children were tempered by something like the milder dignity of parental authority.

Abiram, as usual, seemed the one most given to solicitude and doubt. There were certain misgivings in the frequent glances that he turned on the unyielding countenance of Ishmael which might have betrayed how little of their former confidence and good understanding existed between them. His looks appeared to be vacillating between hope and fear. At times, his countenance lighted with the gleamings of a sordid joy, as he bent his look on the tent which contained his recovered prisoner, and then, again, the impression seemed unaccountably chased away by the shadows of intense apprehension. When under the influence of the latter feeling, his eye never fails to seek the visage of his dull and impenetrable kinsman. But there he rather found reason for alarm, than grounds of encouragement, for the whole character of the squatter's countenance expressed the fearful truth that he had redeemed his dull faculties from the influence of the kidnapper, and that his thoughts were now brooding only on the achievement of his own stubborn intentions.

It was in this state of things that the sons of Ishmael, in obedience to an order from their father, conducted the several subjects of his contemplated decisions from their places of confinement into the open air. No one was exempted from this arrangement. Middleton and Inez, Paul and Ellen, Obed and the trapper, were all brought forth and placed in situations

that were deemed suitable to receive the sentence of their arbitrary judge. The younger children gathered around the spot in momentary but engrossing curiosity, and even Esther quitted her culinary labor and drew nigh to listen.

Hard-Heart alone, of all his band, was present to witness the novel and far from unimposing spectacle. He stood leaning gravely on his lance, while the smoking steed that grazed nigh showed that he had ridden far and hard to be a spectator on the occasion.

Ishmael had received his new ally with a coldness that showed his entire insensibility to that delicacy which had induced the young chief to come alone, in order that the presence of his warriors might not create uneasiness or distrust. He neither courted their assistance nor dreaded their enmity, and he now proceeded to the business of the hour with as much composure as if the species of patriarchal power he wielded was universally recognized.

There is something elevated in the possession of authority, however it may be abused. The mind is apt to make some efforts to prove the fitness between its qualities and the condition of its owner, though it may often fail, and render that ridiculous which was only hated before. But the effect on Ishmael Bush was not so disheartening. Grave in exterior, saturnine by temperament, formidable by his physical means, and dangerous from his lawless obstinacy, his self-constituted tribunal excited a degree of awe to which even the intelligent Middleton could not bring himself to be entirely insensible. Little time, however was given to arrange his thoughts; for the squatter, though unaccustomed to haste, having previously made up his mind, was not disposed to waste the moments in delay. When he saw that all were in their places, he cast a dull look over his prisoners, and addressed himself to the captain, as the principal man among the imaginary delinquents:

"I am called upon this day to fill the office, which in the settlements you give unto judges, who are set apart to decide

on matters that arise between man and man. I have but little knowledge of the ways of the courts, though there is a rule that is known unto all, and which teaches that 'an eye must be returned for an eye,' and 'a tooth for a tooth.' I am no troubler of county-houses, and least of all do I like living on a plantation that the sheriff has surveyed; yet there is a reason in such a law that makes it a safe rule to journey by, and therefore it 'ar a solemn fact that this day shall I abide by it, and give unto all and each that which is his due and no more."

When Ishmael had delivered his mind thus far, he paused and looked about him as he would trace the effects in the countenances of his hearers. When his eye met that of Middleton, he was answered by the latter:

"If the evil-doer is to be punished, and he that has offended none to be left to go at large, you must change situations with me, and become a prisoner instead of a judge."

"You mean to say that I have done you wrong in taking the lady from her father's house, and leading her so far against her will into these wild districts," returned the unmoved squatter, who manifested as little resentment as he betrayed compunction at the charge. "I shall not put the lie on the back of an evil deed and deny your words. Since things have come to this pass between us I have found time to think the matter over at my leisure, and though none of your swift thinkers, who can see or pretend to see into the nature of all things by a turn of the eye, yet am I a man open to reason, and, give me my time, one who is not given to deny the truth. Therefore have I mainly concluded that it was a mistake to take a child from its parent, and the lady shall be returned whence she has been brought, as tenderly and as safely as man can do it."

"Ay, ay," added Esther, "the man is right. Poverty and labor bore hard upon him, especially as county officers were getting troublesome, and in a weak moment he did the wicked act; but he has listened to my words, and his mind has

got round again into its honest corner. An awful and a dangerous thing it is to be bringing the daughters of other people into a peaceable and well-governed family!"

"And who will thank you for the same after what has been already done?" muttered Abiram, with a grin of disappointed cupidity, in which malignity and terror were disgustingly united; "when the devil has once make out his account, you may look for your receipt in full only at his hands."

"Peace!" said Ishmael, stretching his heavy hand toward his kinsman in a manner that instantly silenced the speaker. "Your voice is like a raven's in my ears. If *you* had never spoken, I should have been spared this shame."

"Since, then, you are beginning to lose sight of your errors and to see the truth," said Middleton, "do not things by halves, but by the generosity of your conduct purchase friends who may be of use in warding off any future danger from the law——"

"Young man," interrupted the squatter, with a dark frown, "*you*, too, have said enough. If fear of the law had come over me, you would not be here to witness the manner in which Ishmael Bush deals out justice."

"Smother not your good intentions; and remember, if you contemplate violence to any among us, that the arm of that law you affect to despise reaches far, and that, though its movements are sometimes slow, they are not the less certain!"

"Yes, there is too much truth in his words, squatter," said the trapper, whose attentive ears rarely suffered a syllable to be uttered unheeded in his presence. "A busy and a troublesome arm it often proves to be here in this land of America; where, as they say, man is left greatly to the following of his own wishes, compared to other countries; and happier, ay, and more manly and more honest too, is he for the privilege! Why, do you know, my men, that there are regions where the law is so busy as to say, 'In this fashion shall you live, in that fashion shall you die, and in such another fashion shall you take leave of the world, to be sent before the

judgment-seat of the Lord!" A wicked and a troublesome meddling is that, with the business of One who has not made his creatures to be herded like oxen, and driven from field to field as their stupid and selfish keepers may judge of their need and wants. A miserable land must that be where they fetter the mind as well as the body and where the creatures of God, being born children, are kept so by the wicked inventions of men who would take upon themselves the office of the great Governor of all!"

During the delivery of this pertinent opinion, Ishmael was content to be silent, though the look with which he regarded the speaker manifested any other feeling than that of amity. When the old man had done, he turned to Middleton, and continued the subject which the other had interrupted.

"As to ourselves, young captain, there has been wrong on both sides. If I have borne hard upon your feelings in taking away your wife with an honest intention of giving her back to you when the plans of that devil incarnate were answered, so have you broken into my encampment, aiding and abetting, as they have called many an honest bargain, in destroying my property."

"But what I did was to liberate ——"

"The matter is settled between us," interrupted Ishmael, with the air of one who, having made up his own opinion on the merits of the question, cared very little for those of other people; "you and your wife are free to go and come when and how you please. Abner, set the captain at liberty; and now, if you will tarry until I am ready to draw nigher to the settlements, you shall both have the benefit of carriage; if not never say that you did not get a friendly offer."

"Now, may the strong oppress me, and my sins be visited harshly on my own head, if I forget your honesty, however slow it has been in showing itself!" cried Middleton, hastening to the side of the weeping Inez the instant he was released; "and, friend, I pledge you the honor of a soldier that your own part of this transaction shall be forgotten, whatever I may

deem fit to have done when I reach a place where the arm of government can make itself felt."

The dull smile with which the squatter answered to this assurance proved how little he valued the pledge that the youth, in the first revulsion of his feelings, was so free to make.

"Neither fear nor favor, but what I call justice, has brought me to this judgment," he said; "do you that which may seem right in your eyes, and believe that the world is wide enough to hold us both without our crossing each other's path again. If you ar' content, well; if you ar' not content, seek to ease your feelings in your own fashion. I shall not ask to be let up when you once put me fairly down. And now, doctor, have I come to your leaf in my accounts. It is time to foot up the small reckoning that has been running on for some time atwixt us. With you I entered into open and manly faith; in what manner have you kept it?"

The singular felicity with which Ishmael had contrived to shift the responsibility of all that had passed from his own shoulders to those of his prisoners, backed as it was by circumstances that hardly admitted of a very philosophical examination of any mooted point in ethics, was sufficiently embarrassing to the several individuals who were so unexpectedly required to answer for a conduct which, in their simplicity, they had deemed so meritorious. The life of Obed had been so purely theoretic, that his amazement was not the least embarrassing at a state of things which might not have proved so very remarkable, had he been a little more practiced in the ways of the world. The worthy naturalist was not the first, by many, who found himself, at the precise moment when he was expecting praise, suddenly arraigned to answer for the very conduct on which he rested all his claims to commendation. Though not a little scandalized at the unexpected turn of the transaction, he was fain to make the best of circumstances, and to bring forth such matter in justification as first presented itself to his disordered faculties.

"That there did exist a certain compactum, or agreement, between Obed Batt, M.D., and Ishmael Bush, viator, or erratic husbandman," he said, endeavoring to avoid all offense in the use of terms, "I am not disposed to deny. I will admit that it was therein conditioned, or stipulated, that a certain journey should be performed conjointly, or in company, until so many days had been numbered. But, as the said time was fully expired, I presume it fair to infer that the bargain may now be said to be obsolete."

"Ishmael!" interrupted the impatient Esther, "make no words with a man who can break your bones as easily as set them, and let the poisoning devil go! He's a cheat, from box to phial. Give him half the prairie, and take the other half yourself. He an acclimator! I will engage to get the brats acclimated to a fever-and-ague bottom in a week, and not a word shall be uttered harder to pronounce than the bark of a cherry-tree, with perhaps a drop or two of Western comfort. One thing ar' a fact, Ishmael; I like no fellow-travelers who can give a heavy feel to an honest woman's tongue, I—and that without caring whether her household is in order or out of order."

The air of settled gloom which had taken possession of the squatter's countenance lighted for an instant with a look of dull drollery, as he answered—

"Different people might judge differently, Esther, of the virtue of the man's art. But sin' it is your wish to let him depart, I will not plow the prairie to make the walking rough: Friend, you are at liberty to go into the settlements, and there I would advise you to tarry, as men like me, who make but few contracts, do not relish the custom of breaking them so easily."

"And now, Ishmael," resumed his conquering wife, "in order to keep a quiet family and to smother all heart-burnings between us, show yonder red-skin and his daughter," pointing to the aged La Balafré and the widowed Tachechana, "the way to their village, and let us say to them, 'God bless you, and farewell,' in the same breath!"

"They are captives of the Pawnee according to the rules of Indian warfare, and I cannot meddle with his rights."

"Beware the devil, my man! He's a cheat and a tempter and none can say they ar' safe with his awful delusions before their eyes! Take the advice of one who has the honor of your name at heart, and send the tawny Jezebel away."

The squatter laid his broad hand on her shoulder, and, looking her steadily in the eye, he answered in tones that were both stern and solemn:

"Woman, we have that before us which calls our thoughts to other matters than the follies you mean. Remember what is to come, and put your silly jealousy to sleep."

"It is true, it is true," murmured his wife, moving back among her daughters; "God forgive me that I should forget it!"

"And now, young man—you have so often come into my clearing under the pretense of lining the bee into his hole," resumed Ishmael, after a momentary pause, as if to recover the equilibrium of his mind—"with you there is a heavier account to settle. Not satisfied with rumaging my camp, you have stolen a girl who is akin to my wife, and whom I had calculated to make one day a daughter of my own."

A stronger sensation was produced by this than by any of the preceding interrogations. All the young men bent their curious eyes on Paul and Ellen, the former of whom seemed in no small mental confusion, while the latter bent her face on her bosom in shame.

"Harkee, friend Ishmael Bush," returned the bee-hunter, who found that he was expected to answer to the charge of burglary as well as to that of abduction; "that I did not give the most civil treatment to your pots and pails I am not going to gainsay. If you will name the price you put upon the articles, it is possible the damage may be quietly settled between us and all hard feelings forgotten. I was not in a church-going humor when we got upon your rock, and it is more than probable there was quite as much kicking as preaching among your wares; but a hole in the best man's coat can be

mended by money. As to the matter of Ellen Wade, here, it may not be got over so easily. Different people have different opinions on the subject of matrimony. Some think it is enough to say yes and no to the questions of the magistrate or of the parson, if one happens to be handy, in order to make a quiet house; but I think that, where a young woman's mind is fairly bent on going in a certain direction, it will be quite as prudent to let her body follow. Not that I mean to say Ellen was not altogether forced to what she did, and therefore she is just as innocent in this matter as yonder jackass, who was made to carry her, and greatly against his will, too, as I am ready to swear he would say himself if he could speak as loud as he can bray."

"Nelly," resumed the squatter, who paid very little attention to what Paul considered a highly creditable and ingenious vindication, "Nelly, this is a wide and a wicked world on which you have been in such a hurry to cast yourself. You have fed and you have slept in my camp for a year, and I did hope that you had found the free air of the borders enough to your mind to wish to remain among us."

"Let the girl have her will," muttered Esther, from the rear; "he who might have persuaded her to stay is sleeping in the cold and naked prairie, and little hope is left of changing her humor; besides, a woman's mind is a willful thing, and not easily turned from its waywardness, as you know yourself, my man, or I should not be here the mother of your sons and daughters."

The squatter seemed reluctant to abandon his views on the abashed girl so easily: and, before he answered to the suggestion of his wife, he turned his usual dull look along the line of the curious countenances of his boys, as if to see whether there was not one among them fit to fill the place of the deceased. Paul was not slow to observe the expression, and, hitting nigher than usual on the secret thoughts of the other, he believed he had fallen on an expedient which might remove every difficulty.

"It is quite plain, friend Bush," he said, "that there are two opinions in this matter: yours for your sons, and mine for myself. I see but one amicable way of settling this dispute, which is as follows: do you make a choice among your boys of any you will, and let us walk off together for the matter of a few miles into the prairies; the one who stays behind can never trouble any man's house or his fixin', and the one who comes back may make the best of his way he can, in the good wishes of the young woman."

"Paul," exclaimed the reproachful, but smothered voice of Ellen.

"Never fear, Nelly," whispered the literal bee-hunter, whose straightgoing mind suggested no other motive of uneasiness on the part of his mistress than concern for himself; "I have taken the measure of them all, and you may trust an eye that has seen to line many a bee into his hole!"

"I am not about to set myself up as a ruler of inclinations," observed the squatter. "If the heart of the child is truly in the settlements, let her declare it; she shall have no let or hindrance from me. Speak, Nelly, and let what you say come from your wishes, without fear or favor. Would you leave us to go with this young man into the settled countries, or will you tarry and share the little we have to give, but which to you we give so freely?"

Thus called upon to decide, Ellen could no longer hesitate. The glance of her eye was, at first timid and furtive. But, as the color flushed her features, and her breathing became quick and excited, it was apparent that the native spirit of the girl was gaining the ascendancy over the bashfulness of sex.

"You took me a fatherless, impoverished and friendless orphan," she said, struggling to command her voice, "when others, who live in what may be called affluence compared to your state, chose to forget me; and may Heaven in its goodness bless you for it! The little I have done will never pay you for that one act of kindness. I like not your manner of life; it is different from the ways of my childhood, and it is different from my wishes; still, had you not led this sweet

and unoffending lady from her friends, I should never have quitted you until you yourself had said, 'Go, and the blessing of God go with you!'"

"The act was not wise, but it is repented of; and, so far as it can be done in safety, it shall be repaired. Now, speak freely, will you tarry, or will you go?"

"I have promised the lady," said Ellen, dropping her eyes again to the earth, "not to leave her; and, after she has received so much wrong from all hands, she may have a right to claim that I keep my word."

"Take the cords from the young man," said Ishmael. When the order was obeyed he motioned for all his sons to advance, and he placed them in a row before the eyes of Ellen. "Now let there be no trifling, but open your heart. Here 'ar all I have to offer, besides a hearty welcome."

The distressed girl turned her abashed look from the countenance of one of the young men to that of another, until her eyes met the troubled and working features of Paul. Then Nature got the better of forms. She threw herself into the arms of the bee-hunter, and sufficiently proclaimed her choice by sobbing aloud. Ishmael signed to his sons to fall back, and, evidently mortified, though perhaps not disappointed by the result, he no longer hesitated.

"Take her," he said, "and deal honestly and kindly by her. The girl has that in her which should make her welcome in any man's house, and I should be loath to learn that she ever came to harm. And now I have settled with you all, on terms that I hope you will not find hard, but, on the contrary, just and manly. I have only another question to ask, and that is of the captain. Do you choose to profit by my teams in going into the settlements, or not?"

"I hear that some soldiers of my party are looking for me near the villages of the Pawnees," said Middleton, "and I intend to accompany this chief, in order to join my men."

"Then the sooner we part the better.

Horses are plenty on the bottom. Go; make your choice, and leave us in peace."

"That is impossible, while the old man, who has been a friend of my family near half a century, is left a prisoner. What has he done that he too is not released?"

"Ask no questions that may lead to deceitful answers," suddenly returned the squatter; "I have dealings of my own with that trapper that it may not befit an officer of the States to meddle with. Go, while your road is open."

"The man may be giving you honest counsel, and that which it concerns you all to hearken to," observed the old captive, who seemed in no uneasiness at the extraordinary condition in which he found himself. "The Sioux are a numberless and bloody-minded race, and no one can say how long it may be afore they will be out again on the scent of revenge. Therefore, I say to you, go also; and take especial heed, in crossing the bottoms, that you get not entangled again in the fires, for the honest hunters often burn the grass at this season, in order that the buffaloes may find a sweeter and a greener pasturage in the spring."

"I should forget not only my gratitude, but my duty to the laws, were I to leave this prisoner in your hands, even by his own consent, without knowing the nature of his crime, in which we may have all been his innocent accessaries."

"Will it satisfy you to know that he merits all he will receive?"

"It will at least change my opinion of his character."

"Look, then, at this," said Ishmael, placing before the eyes of the captain the bullet that had been found about the person of the dead Asa; "with this morsel of lead did he lay low as fine a boy as ever gave joy to a parent's eyes!"

"I cannot believe that he has done this deed, unless in self-defense, or on some justifiable provocation. That he knew of the death of your son, I confess, for he pointed out the brake in which the body lay, but that he has wrongfully taken his life, nothing but his own acknowledgment shall persuade me to believe."

"I have lived long," commenced the

trapper, who found by the general pause that he was expected to vindicate himself from the heavy imputation, "and much evil have I seen in my day. Many are the prowling bears and leaping panthers that I have met, fighting for the morsel which has been thrown in their way; and many are the reasoning men that I have looked on striving against each other unto death, in order that human madness might also have its hour. For myself, I hope there is no boasting in saying that, though my hand has been needed in putting down wickedness and oppression, it has never struck a blow of which its owner will be ashamed to hear, at a reckoning that shall be far mightier than this."

"If my father has taken life from one of his tribe," said the young Pawnee, whose quick eye had read the meaning of what was passing, in the bullet and in the countenances of the others, "let him give himself up to the friends of the dead, like a warrior. He is too just to need thongs to lead him to judgment."

"Boy, I hope you do me justice. If I had done the foul deed with which they charge me, I should have manhood enough to come and offer my head to the blow of punishment, as all good and honest red-men do the same." Then giving his anxious Indian friend a look to reassure him of his innocence, he turned to the rest of his attentive and interested listeners, as he continued in English, "I have a short story to tell, and he that believes it will believe the truth, and he that disbelieves it will only lead himself astray, and perhaps his neighbor, too. We were all out-lying about your camp, friend squatter, as by this time you may begin to suspect, when we found that it contained a wronged and imprisoned lady, with intentions neither more honest nor dishonest than to set her free, as in nature and justice she had a right to be. Seeing that I was more skilled in scouting than the others, while they lay back in the cover, I was sent upon the plain, on the business of reconnoiterings. You little thought that one was so nigh who saw into all the circumventions of your hunt; but there was I, sometimes flat behind a

bush or a tuft of grass, sometimes rolling down a hill into a bottom, and little did you dream that your motions were watched as the panther watches the drinking deer. Lord, squatter, when I was a man in the pride and strength of my days, I have looked in at the tent-door of the enemy, and they sleeping, ay, and dreaming, too, of being at home and in peace. I wish there was time to give you the partic—"

"Proceed with your explanation," interrupted Middleton.

"Ah! and a bloody and wicked sight it was! There I lay in a low bed of grass, as two of the hunters came nigh each other. Their meeting was not cordial, nor such as men who meet in a desert should give each other; but I thought they would have parted in peace, until I saw one put his rifle to the other's back, and do what I call a treacherous and sinful murder. It was a noble and a manly youth, that boy! Though the powder burnt his coat, he stood the shock for more than a minute before he fell. Then was he brought to his knees, and a desperate and manly fight he made to the brake, like a wounded bear seeking a cover!"

"And why, in the name of heavenly justice, did you conceal this?" cried Middleton.

"What! think you, captain, that a man who has spent more than threescore years in the wilderness has not learned the virtue of discretion? What red warrior runs to tell the sights he has seen, until a fitting time? I took the doctor to the place in order to see whether his skill might not come in use; and our friend, the bee-hunter, being in company, was knowing to the fact that the bushes held the body."

"Ay, it ar' true," said Paul; "but not knowing what private reasons might make the old trapper wish to hush the matter up, I said as little about the thing as possible; which was just nothing at all."

"And who was the perpetrator of this deed?" demanded Middleton.

"If by perpetrator you mean him who did the act, yonder stands the man, and a

shame and a disgrace is it to our race, that he is of the blood and family of the dead."

"He lies! he lies!" shrieked Abiram. "I did no murder; I gave but blow for blow."

The voice of Ishmael was deep, and even awful, as he answered:

"It is enough. Let the old man go. Boys, put the brother of your mother in his place."

"Touch me not!" cried Abiram. "I'll call on God to curse ye if you touch me!"

The wild and disordered gleam of his eye at first induced the young men to arrest their steps; but when Abner, older and more resolute than the rest, advanced full upon him, with a countenance that bespoke the hostile state of his mind, the affrighted criminal turned, and, making an abortive effort to fly, fell with his face to the earth, to all appearance perfectly dead. Amid the low exclamations of horror which succeeded, Ishmael made a gesture which commanded his sons to bear the body into a tent.

"Now," he said, turning to those who were strangers in his camp, "nothing is left to be done but for each to go his own road. I wish you all well—and to you, Ellen, though you may not prize the gift, I say, God bless you!"

Middleton, awe-struck by what he believed a manifest judgment of Heaven, made no further resistance, but prepared to depart. The arrangements were brief, and soon completed. When they were all ready, they took a short and silent leave of the squatter and his family; and then the whole of the singularly constituted party were seen slowly and silently following the victorious Pawnee toward his distant villages.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"And I beseech you,
Wrest once the law to your authority:
To do a great right, do a little wrong."

—SHAKESPEARE.

ISHMAEL awaited long and patiently for the motley train of Hard-Heart to disappear. When his scout reported that the

last straggler of the Indians, who had joined their chief so soon as he was at such a distance from the encampment as to excite no jealousy by their numbers, had gone behind the most distant swell of the prairie, he gave forth the order to strike his tents. The cattle were already in the gears, and the movables were soon transferred to their usual place in the different vehicles.

When all these arrangements were completed, the little wagon, which had so long been the tenement of Inez, was drawn before the tent into which the insensible body of the kidnapper had been borne, and preparations were evidently made for the reception of another prisoner. Then it was, as Abiram appeared, pale, terrified, and tottering beneath a load of detected guilt, that the younger members of the family were first apprised that he still belonged to the class of the living. A general and superstitious impression had spread among them that his crime had been visited by a terrible retribution from Heaven; and they now gazed at him as at a being who belonged rather to another world, than as a mortal, who, like themselves, had still to endure the last agony before the great link of human existence could be broken. The criminal himself appeared to be in a state in which the most sensitive and startling terror was singularly combined with total physical apathy. The truth was that, while his person had been numbed by the shock, his susceptibility to apprehension kept his agitated mind in unrelieved distress. When he found himself in the open air he looked about him in order to gather, if possible, some evidences of his future fate from the countenances of those gathered round. Seeing everywhere grave but composed features, and meeting in no eye any expression that threatened immediate violence, the miserable man began to revive; and, by the time he was seated in the wagon, his artful faculties were beginning to plot the expedients of parrying the just resentment of his kinsmen, or, if these should fail him, the means of escaping from a punishment that his forebodings told him would be terrible.

Throughout the whole of these preparations, Ishmael rarely spoke. A gesture, or a glance of the eye, served to indicate his pleasure to his sons, and with these simple methods of communication all parties appeared content. When the signal was made to proceed, the squatter threw his rifle into the hollow of his arm and his ax across his shoulder, taking the lead as usual. Esther buried herself in the wagon which contained her daughters; the young men took their customary places among the cattle or nigh the teams; and the whole proceeded at their ordinary dull but unremitted gait.

For the first time in many a day the squatter turned his back toward the setting sun. The route he held was in the direction of the settled country, and the manner in which he moved sufficed to tell his children, who had learned to read their father's determinations in his mien, that their journey on the prairie was shortly to have an end. Still nothing else transpired for hours that might denote the existence of any sudden or violent revolution in the purposes or feelings of Ishmael. During all that time he marched alone, keeping a few hundred rods in front of his teams, seldom giving any sign of extraordinary excitement. Once or twice, indeed, his huge figure was seen standing on the summit of some distant swell, with the head bent toward the earth, as he leaned on his rifle; but then these moments of intense thought were rare, and of short continuance. The train had long thrown its shadows toward the east before any material alteration was made in the disposition of their march. Water-courses were waded, plains were passed, and rolling ascents risen and descended, without producing the smallest change. Long practiced in the difficulties of that peculiar species of traveling in which he was engaged, the squatter avoided the more impracticable obstacles of their route by a sort of instinct, invariably inclining to the right or left in season, as the formation of the land, the presence of trees, or the signs of rivers forewarned him of the necessity of such movements.

At length the hour arrived when charity to man and beast, required a temporary suspension of labor. Ishmael chose the required spot with his customary sagacity. The regular formation of the country, such as it has been described in the earlier pages of our book, had long been interrupted by a more unequal and broken surface. There were, it is true, in general, the same wide and empty wastes, the same rich and extensive bottoms, and that wild and singular combination of swelling fields and of nakedness which gives that region the appearance of an ancient country, incomprehensibly stripped of its people and their dwellings. But these distinguishing features of the rolling prairies had long been interrupted by irregular hillocks, occasional masses of rock, and broad belts of forest.

Ishmael chose a spring that broke out of the base of a rock some forty or fifty feet in elevation, as a place well suited to the wants of his herds. The water moistened a small swale that lay beneath the spot, which yielded, in return for the fecund gift, a scanty growth of grass. A solitary willow had taken root in the alluvion, and, profiting by its exclusive possession of the soil, the tree had sent up its stem far above the crest of the adjacent rock, whose peaked summit had once been shadowed by its branches. But its loveliness had gone with the mysterious principle of life. As if in mockery of the meager show of verdure that the spot exhibited, it remained a noble and solemn monument of former fertility. The larger, ragged, and fantastic branches still obtruded themselves abroad, while the white and hoary trunk stood naked and tempest-riven. Not a leaf nor a sign of vegetation was to be seen about it. In all things it proclaimed the frailty of existence, and the fulfillment of time.

Here Ishmael, after making the customary signal for the train to approach, threw his vast frame upon the earth and seemed to muse on the deep responsibility of his present situation. His sons were not long in arriving; for the cattle no sooner scented the food and water than they quickened their pace, and then succeeded

the usual bustle and avocations of a halt.

The impression made by the scene of that morning was not so deep or lasting on the children of Ishmael and Esther as to induce them to forget the wants of Nature. But while the sons were searching among their stores for something substantial to appease their hunger, and the younger fry were wrangling about their simple dishes, the parents of the unnurtured family were differently employed.

When the squatter saw that all, even to the reviving Abiram, were busy in administering to their appetites, he gave his downcast partner a glance of his eye, and withdrew toward a distant roll of the land which bounded the view toward the east. The meeting of the pair in this naked spot was like an interview held above the grave of their murdered son. Ishmael signed to his wife to take a seat beside him on a fragment of rock, and then followed a space during which neither seemed disposed to speak.

"We have journeyed together long, through good and bad," Ishmael at length commenced; "much have we had to try us, and some bitter cups have we been made to swallow, my woman; but nothing like this has ever before lain in my path."

"It is a heavy cross for a poor, misguided, and sinful woman to bear," returned Esther, bowing her head to her knees, and partly concealing her face in her dress. "A heavy and a burdensome weight is this to be laid upon the shoulders of a sister and a mother!"

"Ay; therein lies the hardship of the case. I had brought my mind to the punishment of that houseless trapper with no great strivings, for the man had done me few favors, and God forgive me if I suspected him wrongfully of much evil! This is, however, bringing shame in at one door of my cabin in order to drive it out at the other. But shall a son of mine be murdered, and he who did it go at large?—the boy would never rest!"

"Oh! Ishmael, we pushed the matter far! Had little been said, who would have been the wiser? Our consciences might then have been quiet."

"Eester," said the husband, turning on her a reproachful but still a dull regard, "the hour has been, my woman, when you thought another hand had done this wickedness."

"I did, I did! the Lord gave me the feeling as a punishment for my sins! but his mercy was not slow in lifting the veil; I looked into the book, Ishmael, and there I found the words of comfort."

"Have you that book at hand, woman? it may happen to advise in such a dreary business."

Esther fumbled in her pocket, and was not long in producing the fragment of a Bible which had been thumbed and smoke-dried till the print was nearly illegible. It was the only article in the nature of a book that was to be found among the chattels of the squatter, and it had been preserved by his wife as a melancholy relic of more prosperous, and possibly of more innocent, days. She had long been in the habit of resorting to it under the pressure of such circumstances as were palpably beyond human redress, though her spirit and resolution rarely needed support under those that admitted of reparation through any of the ordinary means of reprisal. In this manner Esther had made a sort of convenient ally of the word of God, rarely troubling it for counsel, however, except when her own incompetency to avert an evil was too apparent to be disputed. We shall leave casuists to determine how far she resembled any other believers in this particular, and proceed directly with the matter before us.

"There are many awful passages in these pages, Ishmael," she said, when the volume was opened, and the leaves were slowly turning under her finger, "and some there are that teach the rules of punishment."

Her husband made a gesture for her to find one of those brief rules of conduct which have been received among all Christian nations as the direct mandates of the Creator, and which have been found so just that even they who deny their high authority, admit their wisdom. Ishmael listened with grave attention as his com-

panion read all those verses which her memory suggested, and which were thought applicable to the situation in which they found themselves. He made her show him the words, which he regarded with a sort of strange reverence. A resolution once taken was usually irrevocable in one who was moved with so much difficulty. He put his hand upon the book and closed the pages himself, as much as to apprise his wife that he was satisfied. Esther, who so well knew his character, trembled at the action, and, casting a glance at his steady eye, she said:

"And yet, Ishmael, my blood and the blood of my children is in his veins! cannot mercy be shown?"

"Woman," he answered, sternly, "when we believed that miserable old trapper had done this deed, nothing was said of mercy!"

Esther made no reply, but, folding her arms upon her breast, she sat silent and thoughtful for many minutes. Then she once more turned her anxious gaze upon the countenance of her husband, where she found all passion and care apparently buried in the coldest apathy. Satisfied now that the fate of her brother was sealed, and possibly conscious how well he merited the punishment that was meditated, she no longer thought of mediation. No more words passed between them. Their eyes met for an instant, and then both arose and walked in profound silence toward the encampment.

The squatter found his children expecting his return in the usual listless manner with which they awaited all coming events. The cattle were already herded, and the horses in their gears in readiness to proceed, so soon as he should indicate that such was his pleasure. The children were already in their proper vehicle, and, in short, nothing delayed the departure but the absence of the parents of the wild brood.

"Abner," said the father, with the deliberation with which all his proceedings were characterized, "take the brother of your mother from the wagon, and let him stand on the 'arth."

Abiram issued from his place of con-

cealment, trembling, it is true, but far from destitute of hopes as to his final success in appeasing the just resentment of his kinsman. After throwing a glance around him with the vain wish of finding a single countenance in which he might detect a solitary gleam of sympathy, he endeavored to smother those apprehensions that were by this time reviving in their original violence, by forcing a sort of friendly communication between himself and the squatter:

"The beasts are getting jaded, brother," he said; "and as we have made so good a march already, is it not time to 'camp? To my eye you may go far before a better place than this is found to pass the night in."

"'Tis well you like it. Your tarry here ar' likely to be long. My sons, draw nigh and listen." Abiram White," he added, lifting his cap, and speaking with a solemnity and steadiness that rendered even his dull mien imposing, "you have slain my first-born, and according to the laws of God and man you must die!"

The kidnapper started at this terrible and sudden sentence, with the terror that one would exhibit who unexpectedly found himself in the grasp of a monster from whose power there was no retreat. Although filled with the most serious forebodings of what might be his lot, his courage had not been equal to look his danger in the face, and, with the deceitful consolation with which timid tempers are apt to conceal their desperate condition from themselves, he had rather courted a treacherous relief in his cunning than prepared himself for the worst.

"Die!" he repeated, in a voice that scarcely issued from his chest; "a man is surely safe enough among his kinsmen!"

"So thought my boy," returned the squatter, motioning for the team that contained his wife and the girls to proceed, as he very coolly examined the priming of his piece. "By the rifle did you destroy my son: it is fit and just that you meet your end by the same weapon."

Abiram stared about him with a gaze that bespoke an unsettled reason. He even laughed, as if he would not only per-

suade himself but others that what he heard was some pleasantry intended to try his nerves. But nowhere did his frightful merriment meet with an answering echo. All around was solemn and still. The visages of his nephews were excited but cold toward him, and that of his former confederate determined. This very steadiness of mien was a thousand times more alarming and hopeless than any violence could have proved. The latter might possibly have touched his spirit and awakened resistance, but the former threw him entirely on the feeble resources of himself.

"Brother," he said, in a hurried, unnatural whisper, "did I hear you?"

"My words are plain, Abiram White; thou hast done murder, and for the same thou must die!"

"Esther! sister, sister, will you leave me? O sister! do you hear my call?"

"I hear one speak from the grave!" returned the husky tones of Esther, as the wagon passed the spot where the criminal stood. "It is the voice of my first-born calling aloud for justice! God have mercy, God have mercy on your soul!"

The team slowly pursued its route, and the deserted Abiram now found himself deprived of the smallest vestige of hope. Still he could not summon fortitude to meet his death, and, had not his limbs refused to aid him, he would yet have attempted to fly. Then by a sudden revolution from hope to utter despair, he fell upon his knees and commenced a prayer in which cries for mercy to God and to his kinsman were wildly and blasphemously mingled. The sons of Ishmael turned away in horror at the disgusting spectacle, and even the stern nature of the squatter began to bend before so abject misery.

"May that which you ask of him for be granted," he said, "but a father can never forget a murdered child."

He was answered by the most humble appeals for time. A week, a day, an hour, were each implored with an earnestness commensurate to the value they receive when a whole life is compressed into their short duration. The squatter was troubled, and at length he yielded in

part to the petitions of the criminal. His final purpose was not altered, though he changed the means. "Abner," he said, "mount the rock and look on every side, that we may be sure none are nigh."

While his nephew was obeying this order, gleams of reviving hope were seen shooting across the quivering features of the kidnapper. The report was favorable; nothing having life, the retiring teams excepted, was to be seen. A messenger was, however, coming from the latter in great apparent haste. Ishmael awaited its arrival. He received from the hands of one of his wondering and frightened girls a fragment of that book which Esther had preserved with so much care. The squatter beckoned the child away, and placed the leaves in the hands of the criminal.

"Esther has sent you this," he said, "that in your last moments you may remember God."

"Bless her, bless her! a good and kind sister has she been to me! But time must be given that I may read; time, my brother, time!"

"Time shall not be wanting. You shall be your own executioner, and this miserable office shall pass away from my hands."

Ishmael proceeded to put his new resolution into force. The immediate apprehensions of the kidnapper were quieted by an assurance that he might yet live for days, though his punishment was inevitable. A reprieve to one abject and wretched as Abiram, temporarily produced the same effects as a pardon. He was even foremost in assisting in the appalling arrangements, and, of all actors in that solemn tragedy, his voice alone was facetious and jocular.

A thin shelf of the rock projected beneath one of the ragged arms of the willow. It was many feet from the ground, and admirably adapted to the purpose which, in fact, its appearance had suggested. On this little platform the criminal was placed, his arms bound at the elbows behind his back, beyond the possibility of liberation, with a proper cord leading from his neck to the limb of the tree. The latter was so placed, that when suspended the body could find no foothold.

The fragment of the Bible was placed in his hands, and he was left to seek his consolation as he might from its pages.

"And now, Abiram White," said the squatter, when his sons had descended from completing this arrangement, "I give you a last and solemn asking. Death is before you in two shapes. With this rifle can your misery be cut short, or by that cord, sooner or later, must you meet your end."

"Let me live! Oh, Ishmael, you know not how sweet life is when the last moment draws so nigh!"

"Tis done," said the squatter, motioning for his assistants to follow the herds and teams. "And now, miserable man, that it may prove a consolation to your end, I forgive you my wrongs and leave you to your God."

Ishmael turned and pursued his way across the plain at his ordinary sluggish and ponderous gait. Though his head was bent a little toward the earth, his inactive mind did not prompt him to cast a look behind. Once, indeed, he thought he heard his name called in tones that were a little smothered, but they failed to make him pause.

At the spot where he and Esther had conferred he reached the boundary of the visible horizon from the rock. Here he stopped, and ventured a glance in the direction of the place he had just quitted. The sun was near dipping into the plains beyond, and its last rays lighted the naked branches of the willow. He saw the ragged outline of the whole drawn against the glowing heavens, and he even traced the still upright form of the being he had left to his misery. Turning the roll of the swell, he proceeded with the feelings of one who had been suddenly and violently separated from a recent confederate forever.

Within a mile the squatter overtook his teams. His sons had found a place suited to the encampment for the night, and merely awaited his approach to confirm their choice. Few words were necessary to express his acquiescence. Everything passed in a silence more general and remarkable than ever. The chidings of

Esther were not heard among her young, or, if heard, they were more in the tones of softened admonition than in her usual upbraiding key.

No questions nor explanations passed between the husband and his wife. It was only as the latter was about to withdraw among her children for the night, that the former saw her taking a furtive look at the pan of his rifle. Ishmael bade his sons seek their rest, announcing his intention to look to the safety of the camp in person. When all was still he walked out upon the prairie with a sort of sensation that he found his breathing among the tents too straitened. The night was well adapted to heighten the feelings which had been created by the events of the day.

The wind had risen with the moon, and it was occasionally sweeping over the plain in a manner that made it not difficult for the sentinel to imagine strange and unearthly sounds were mingling in the blasts. Yielding to the extraordinary impulses of which he was the subject, he cast a glance around to see that all were slumbering in security, and then he strayed toward the swell of land already mentioned. Here the squatter found himself at a point that commanded a view to the east and to the west. Light, fleecy clouds were driving before the moon, which was cold and watery, though there were moments when its placid rays were shed from clear blue fields, seeming to soften objects to its own mild loveliness.

For the first time in a life of so much wild adventure, Ishmael felt a keen sense of solitude. The naked prairies began to assume the forms of illimitable and dreary wastes, and the rushing of the wind sounded like the whisperings of the dead. It was not long before he thought a shriek was borne past him on a blast. It did not sound like a call from earth, but it swept frightfully through the upper air, mingled with the hoarse accompaniment of the wind. The teeth of the squatter were compressed, and his huge hand grasped the rifle, as if it would crush the metal. Then came a lull, a fresher blast, and a cry of horror that seemed to have

been uttered at the very portals of his ears. A sort of echo-burst involuntarily from his own lips, as men shout under unnatural excitement, and throwing his rifle across his shoulder, he proceeded toward the rock with the strides of a giant.

It was not often that the blood of Ishmael moved at the rate with which the fluid circulates in the veins of ordinary men; but now he felt it ready to gush from every pore in his body. The animal was aroused, in his most latent energies. Ever as he advanced he heard those shrieks, which sometimes seemed ringing among the clouds, and sometimes passed so high as to appear to brush the earth. At length there came a cry in which there could be no delusion, or to which the imagination could lend no horror. It appeared to fill each cranny of the air, as the visible horizon is often charged to fullness by the dazzling flash of the electric fluid. The name of God was distinctly audible, but it was awfully and blasphemously blended with sounds that may not be repeated. The squatter stopped, and for a moment he covered his ears with his hands. When he withdrew the latter, a low and husky voice at his elbow asked in smothered tones:

"Ishmael, my man, hear ye nothing?"

"Hist!" returned the husband, laying a powerful arm on Esther, without manifesting the smallest surprise at the unlooked-for presence of his wife. "Hist, woman! if you have the fear of Heaven, be still."

A profound silence succeeded. Though the wind rose and fell as before, its rushing was no longer mingled with those fearful cries. The sounds were imposing and solemn, but it was the solemnity and majesty of Nature.

"Let us go on," said Esther; "all is hushed."

"Woman, what has brought you here?" demanded her husband, whose blood had returned into its former channels, and whose thoughts had already lost a portion of their excitement.

"Ishmael, he murdered our first-born; but it is not meet that the son of my

mother should lie upon the ground, like the carrion of a dog."

"Follow!" returned the squatter, again grasping his rifle, and striding toward the rock. The distance was still considerable; and their approach, as they drew nigh the place of execution, was moderated by awe. Many minutes had passed before they reached a spot where they might distinguish the outlines of the dusky objects.

"Where have you put the body?" whispered Esther. "See, here are pick and spade, that a brother of mine may sleep in the bosom of the earth!"

The moon broke from behind a mass of clouds, and the eye of the woman was enabled to follow the finger of Ishmael. It pointed to a human form swinging in the wind, beneath the ragged and shining arm of the willow. Esther bent her head and veiled her eyes from the sight. But Ishmael drew nigher, and contemplated his work in awe, though not in compunction. The leaves of the sacred book were scattered on the ground, and even a fragment of the shelf had been displaced by the kidnapper in his agony. But all was now in the stillness of death. The grim and convulsed countenance of the victim was at times brought full into the light of the moon, and again, as the wind lulled, the fatal rope drew a dark line across its bright disk. The squatter raised his rifle with extreme care and fired. The cord was cut, and the body came lumbering to the earth, a heavy and insensible mass.

Until now Esther had not moved or spoken. But her hand was not slow to assist in the labor of the hour. The grave was soon dug. It was instantly made to receive its miserable tenant. As the lifeless form descended, Esther, who sustained the head, looked up into the face of her husband with an expression of anguish, and said:

"Ishmael, my man, it is very terrible! I cannot kiss the corpse of my father's child!"

The squatter laid his broad hand on the bosom of the dead, and said:

"Abiram White, we all have need of mercy; from my soul do I forgive you!

May God in Heaven have pity on your sins !”

The woman bowed her face, and imprinted her lips long and fervently on the pallid forehead of her brother. After this came the falling clods and all the solemn sounds of filling a grave. Esther lingered on her knees, and Ishmael stood uncovered while the woman muttered a prayer. All was then finished.

On the following morning the teams and herds of the squatter were seen pursuing their course toward the settlements. As they approached the confines of society, the train was blended among a thousand others. Though some of the numerous descendants of this peculiar pair were reclaimed from their lawless and semi-barbarous lives, the principals of the family themselves were never heard of more.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE passage of the Pawnee to his village was interrupted by no scene of violence. His vengeance had been as complete as it was summary. Not even a solitary scout of the Sioux was left on the hunting-grounds he was obliged to traverse, and of course the journey of Middleton's party was as peaceful as if made in the bosom of the States. The marches were timed to meet the weakness of the females. In short, the victors seemed to have lost every trace of ferocity with their success, and appeared disposed to consult the most trifling of the wants of that engrossing people who were daily encroaching on their rights, and reducing the red-men of the West from their state of proud independence to the condition of fugitives and wanderers.

Our limits will not permit a detail of the triumphant entry of the conquerors. The exultation of the tribe was proportioned to its previous despondency. Mothers boasted of the honorable deaths of their sons; wives proclaimed the honor and pointed to the scars of their husbands; and Indian girls rewarded the young braves with songs of triumph. The trophies of their fallen enemies were ex-

hibited, as conquered standards are displayed in more civilized regions. The deeds of former warriors were recounted by the aged men, and declared to be eclipsed by the glory of this victory; while Hard-Heart himself, so distinguished for his exploits from boyhood to that hour, was unanimously proclaimed and reproclaimed the worthiest chief and the stoutest brave that the Wahcondah had ever bestowed on his most favored children, the Pawnees of the Loups.

Notwithstanding the comparative security in which Middleton found his recovered treasure, he was not sorry to see his faithful and sturdy artillerists, standing among the throng as he entered in the wild train, and lifting their voices in a martial shout to greet his return. The presence of this force, small as it was, removed every shadow of uneasiness from his mind. It made him master of his movements, gave him dignity and importance in the eyes of his new friends, and would enable him to overcome the difficulties of the wide region which still lay between the village of the Pawnees and the nearest fortress of his countrymen. A lodge was yielded to the exclusive possession of Inez and Ellen; and even Paul, when he saw an armed sentinel in the uniform of the States pacing before its entrance, was content to stray among the dwellings of the “red-skins,” prying with but little reserve into their domestic economy, commenting sometimes jocularly, sometimes gravely, and always freely, on their different expedients, or endeavoring to make the wondering housewives comprehend his quaint explanations of what he conceived to be the better customs of the whites.

This inquiring and troublesome spirit found no imitators among the Indians. The delicacy and reserve of Hard-Heart was communicated to his people. When every attention that could be suggested by their simple manners and narrow wants had been fulfilled, no intrusive foot presumed to approach the cabins devoted to the service of the strangers. They were left to seek their repose in the manner which most comported with their

habits and inclinations. The songs and rejoicings of the tribe, however, ran far into the night, during the deepest hours of which the voice of more than one warrior was heard, recounting, from the top of his lodge, the deeds of his people and the glory of their triumphs.

Everything having life, notwithstanding the excesses of the night, was abroad with the appearance of the sun. The expression of exultation, which had so lately been seen on every countenance, was now changed to one better suited to the feeling of the moment. It was understood by all that the pale-faces, who had befriended their chief, were about to take their final leave of the tribe. The soldiers of Middleton, in anticipation of his arrival, had bargained with an unsuccessful trader for the use of his boat, which lay in the stream ready to receive its cargo, and nothing remained to complete the arrangements for the long journey.

Middleton did not see this moment arrive entirely without distrust. The admiration with which Hard-Heart regarded Inez had not escaped his jealous eye, any more than had the lawless wishes of Mahtoree. He knew the consummate manner in which a savage could conceal his designs, and he felt that it would be a culpable weakness to be unprepared for the worst. Secret instructions were, therefore, given to his men, while the preparations they made were properly masked behind the show of military parade with which it was intended to signalize their departure.

The conscience of the young soldier reproached him when he saw the whole tribe accompanying his party to the margin of the stream, with unarmed hands and sorrowful countenances. They gathered in a circle around the strangers and their chief, and became not only peaceful but highly interested observers of what was passing. As it was evident that Hard-Heart intended to speak, the former stopped, and manifested their readiness to listen, the trapper performing the office of interpreter. Then the young chief addressed his people, in the usual metaphorical language of an Indian.

He commenced by alluding to the an-

tiquity and renown of his own nation. He spoke of their successes in the hunts and on the war-path; of the manner in which they had always known how to defend their rights and to chastise their enemies. After he had said enough to manifest his respect for the greatness of the Loups, and to satisfy the pride of the listeners, he made a sudden transition to the race of whom the strangers were members. He compared their countless numbers to the flights of migratory birds in the season of blossoms, or in the fall of the year. With a delicacy that none knew better how to practice than an Indian warrior, he made no direct mention of the rapacious tempers that so many of them had betrayed in their dealings with the red-men. Feeling that the sentiment of distrust was strongly engrafted in the tempers of his tribe, he rather endeavored to soothe any just resentment they might entertain, by indirect excuses and apologies. He reminded the listeners that even the Pawnee Loups had been obliged to chase many unworthy individuals from their villages. The Wahcondah sometimes veiled his countenance from a red-man. No doubt the Great Spirit of the pale-faces often looked darkly on his children. Such as were abandoned to the worker of evil could never be brave or virtuous, let the color of the skin be what it might. He bade his young men look at the hands of the Big-knives. They were not empty, like those of hungry beggars. Neither were they filled with goods, like those of knavish traders. They were, like themselves, warriors, and they carried arms which they knew well how to use—they were worthy to be called brothers!

Then he directed the attention of all to the chief of the strangers. He was a son of their great white father. He had not come upon the prairies to frighten the buffaloes from their pastures, or to seek the game of the Indians. Wicked men had robbed him of one of his wives; no doubt she was the most obedient, the meekest, the loveliest of them all. They had only to open their eyes to see that his words must be true. Now that the white

chief had found his wife, he was about to return to his own people in peace. He would tell them that the Pawnees were just, and there would be a line of wampum between the two nations. Let all his people wish the strangers a safe return to their towns. The warriors of the Loups knew both how to receive their enemies, and how to clear the briars from the path of their friends.

The heart of Middleton beat quick, as the young partisan* alluded to the charms of Inez, and for an instant he cast an impatient glance at his little line of artillerymen; but the chief from that moment appeared to forget he had ever seen so fair a being. His feelings, if he had any on the subject, were veiled behind the cold mask of Indian self-denial. He took each warrior by the hand, not forgetting the meanest soldier, but his cold and collected eye never wandered for an instant toward either of the females. Arrangements had been made for their comfort with a prodigality and care that had not failed to excite some surprise in his young men, but in no other particular did he shock their manly pride by betraying any solicitude in behalf of the weaker sex.

The leave-taking was general and imposing. Each male Pawnee was sedulous to omit no one of the strange warriors in his attentions, and, of course, the ceremony occupied some time. The only exception, and that was not general, was in the case of Dr. Battius. Not a few of the young men, it is true, were indifferent about lavishing civilities on one of so doubtful a profession, but the worthy naturalist found some consolation in the more matured politeness of the old men, who had inferred that, though not of much use in war, the medicine of the Big-knives might possibly be made serviceable in peace.

* The Americans and the Indians have adopted several words, which each believe peculiar to the language of the others. Thus "squaw," "papoose," or child, wigwam, etc., etc., though it is doubtful whether they belonged at all to any Indian dialect, are much used by both whites and red men in their intercourse. Many words are derived from the French in this species of prairies nomadic. Partisan, brave, etc., are of the number.

When all of Middleton's party had embarked, the trapper lifted a small bundle, which had lain at his feet during the previous proceedings, and, whistling Hector to his side, he was the last to take his seat. The artillerymen gave the usual cheers, which were answered by a shout from the tribe, and then the boat was shoved into the current, and began to glide swiftly down its stream.

A long and a musing, if not a melancholy silence, succeeded this departure. It was first broken by the trapper, whose regret was not the least visible in his dejected and sorrowful eye:

"They are a valiant and an honest tribe," he said; "that will I say boldly in their favor; and second only do I take them to be to that once mighty but now scattered people, the Delawares of the Hills. Ah's me, captain, if you had seen as much good and evil as I have seen in these nations of red-skins, you would know of how much value was a brave and simple-minded warrior. I know that some are to be found who both think and say that an Indian is but little better than the beasts of these naked plains. But it is needful to be honest in one's self, to be a fitting judge of honesty in others. No doubt, no doubt, they know their enemies, and little do they care to show to such any great confidence or love."

"It is the way of man," returned the captain; "and it is probable they are not wanting in any of his natural qualities."

"No, no; it is little that they want, that Nature has had to give. But as little does he know of the temper of a red-skin, who has seen but one Indian, or one tribe, as he knows of the color of feathers who has only looked upon a crow. Now, friend steersman, just give the boat a sheer toward yonder low sandy point, and a favor will be granted at a short asking."

"For what?" demanded Middleton; "we are now in the swiftest of the current, and by drawing to the shore we shall lose the force of the stream."

"Your tarry will not be long," returned the old man, applying his own hand to the execution of that which he had requested. The oarsmen had seen enough of his in-

fluence with their leader not to dispute his wishes, and, before time was given for further discussion on the subject the bow of the boat had touched the land.

"Captain," resumed the other, untying his little wallet with great deliberation, and even in a manner to show he found satisfaction in the delay, "I wish to offer you a small matter of trade. No great bargain, mayhap; but still the best that one, of whose hand the skill of the rifle has taken leave, and who has become no better than a miserable trapper, can offer before we part."

"Part!" was echoed from every mouth, among those who had so recently shared his dangers, and profited by his care.

"What the devil, old trapper! do you mean to foot it to the settlements, when here is a boat that will float the distance in half the time that the jackass the doctor has given the Pawnee could trot along the same?"

"Settlements, boy! It is long sin' I took my leave of the waste and wickedness of the settlements and villages. If I live in a clearing, here, it is one of the Lord's making, and I have no hard thoughts on the matter; but never again shall I be seen running willfully into the danger of immoralities."

"I had not thought of parting," answered Middleton, endeavoring to seek some relief from the uneasiness he felt, by turning his eyes on the sympathizing countenances of his friends; "on the contrary, I had hoped and believed that you would have accompanied us below, where, I give you a sacred pledge, nothing shall be wanting to make your days comfortable."

"Yes, lad, yes; you would do your endeavors; but what are the strivings of man against the workings of the devil? Ay, if kind offers and good wishes could have done the thing, I might have been a Congressman, or perhaps a Governor, years ago. Your grand'ther wished the same, and there are them still living in the Otsego mountains, as I hope, who would gladly have given me a palace for my dwelling. But what are riches with-

out content? My time must now be short, at any rate, and I hold it's no mighty sin for one who has acted his part honestly near ninety winters and summers, to wish to pass the few hours that remain in comfort. If you think I have done wrong in coming thus far to quit you again, captain, I will own the reason of the act, without shame or backwardness. Though I have seen so much of the wilderness, it is not to be gainsaid that my feelings, as well as my skin, are white. Now, it would not be a fitting spectacle that yonder Pawnee Loups should look upon the weakness of an old warrior, if weakness he should happen to show in parting forever from those he has reason to love, though he may not set his heart so strongly on them as to wish to go into the settlements in their company."

"Harkee, old trapper," said Paul, clearing his throat with a desperate effort, as if determined to give his voice a clear exit, "I have just one bargain to make, since you talk of trading, which is neither more or less than this: I offer you, as my side of the business, one-half of my shanty, nor do I much care if it be the biggest half; the sweetest and the purest honey that can be made of the wild locust; always enough to eat, with now and then a mouthful of venison, or, for that matter, a morsel of buffalo's hump, seeing that I intend to push my acquaintance with the animal, and as good and as tidy cooking as can come from the hands of one like Ellen Wade, here, who will shortly be Nellie somebody else, and altogether such general treatment as a decent man might be supposed to pay to his best friend, or, for that matter, to his own father; in return for the same, you ar' to give us at odd moments some of your ancient traditions, perhaps a little wholesome advice on occasions, in small quantities at a time, and as much of your agreeable company as you please."

"It is well—it is well, boy!" returned the old man, fumbling at his wallet; "honestly offered, and not unthankfully declined—but it cannot be; no, it can never be."

"Venerable venator," said Dr. Battius,

"there are obligations which every man owes to society and to human nature. It is time that you should return to your countrymen, to deliver up some of those stores of experimental knowledge that you have doubtless obtained by so long a sojourn in the wilds, which, however they may be corrupted by preconceived opinions, will prove acceptable bequests to those whom, as you say, you must shortly leave forever."

"Friend physicianer," returned the trapper, looking the other steadily in the face, "as it would be no easy matter to judge of the temper of the rattler by considering the fashions of the moose, so it would be hard to speak of the usefulness of one man by thinking too much of the deeds of another. You have your gifts like others, I suppose, and little do I wish to disturb them. But as to me, the Lord has made me for a doer and not a talker, and therefore do I consider it no harm to shut my ears to your invitation."

"It is enough," interrupted Middleton; "I have seen and heard so much of this extraordinary man, as to know that persuasions will not change his purpose. First, we will hear your request, my friend, and then we will consider what may be best done for your advantage."

"It is a small matter, captain," returned the old man, succeeding at length in opening his bundle. "A small and trifling matter is it, to what I once used to offer in the way of a bargain; but then it is the best I have, and therein not to be despised. Here are the skins of four beavers, that I took, it might be a month afore we met, and here is another from a raccoon, that is of no great matter, to be sure, but which may serve to make weight atween us."

"And what do you propose to do with them?"

"I offer them in lawful barter. Them knaves the Sioux—the Lord forgive me for ever believing it was the Konzas!—have stolen the best of my traps, and driven me altogether to make shift inventions, which might foretell a dreary winter for me should my time stretch into another season. I wish you therefore to take the skins

and to offer them to some of the trappers you will not fail to meet below, in exchange for a few traps, and to send the same into the Pawnee village in my name. Be careful to have my mark painted on them: a letter N, with a hound's ear and the lock of a rifle. There is no red-skin who will then dispute my right. For all which trouble I have little more to offer than my thanks, unless my friend, the bee-hunter here, will accept of the raccoon, and take on himself the special charge of the whole matter."

"If I do I may be ——!" The mouth of Paul was stopped by the hand of Ellen, and he was obliged to swallow the rest of the sentence, which he did with a species of emotion that bore no slight resemblance to the process of strangulation.

"Well, well," returned the old man, meekly, "I hope there is no heavy offense in the offer. I know that the skin of a raccoon is of small price, but then it was no mighty labor that I asked in return."

"You entirely mistake the meaning of our friend," interrupted Middleton, who observed that the bee-hunter was looking in every direction but the right one, and that he was utterly unable to make his own vindication. "He did not mean to say that he declined the charge, but merely that he refused all compensation. It is unnecessary, however, to say more of this; it shall be my office to see that the debt we owe is properly discharged, and that all your necessities shall be anticipated."

"Anan!" said the old man, looking up inquiringly into the other's face, as if to ask an explanation.

"It shall be as you wish. Lay all the skins with my baggage. We will bargain for you as for ourselves."

"Thankee, thankee, captain; your gran'ther was of a free and generous mind. So much so, in truth, that those just people, the Delawares, called him the 'Open-hand.' I wish now, I was as I used to be, in order that I might send in the lady a few delicate martens for her tippets and overcoats, just to show you that I know how to give courtesy. But do not expect the same, for I am too old to give the promise! It will all be just as the Lord

shall see fit. I can offer you nothing else, for I haven't lived so long in the wilderness not to know the scrupulous ways of a gentleman."

"Harkee, old trapper," cried the bee-hunter, striking his own hand into the open palm which the other had extended, with a report but little below the crack of a rifle, "I have just two things to say: firstly, that the captain has told you my meaning better than I can myself, and secondly, if you want a skin, either for your private use or to send abroad, I have it at your service; and that is the skin of one Paul Hover!"

The old man returned the grasp he received, and opened his mouth to the utmost in his extraordinary, silent laugh.

"You couldn't have given such a squeeze, boy, when the Teton squaws were about you with their knives? Ah! you are in your prime and in your vigor and happiness, if honesty lies in your path." Then the expression of his rugged features suddenly changed to a look of seriousness and thought. "Come hither, lad," he said, leading the bee-hunter by a button to the land, and speaking apart in a tone of admonition and confidence; "much has passed atween us on the pleasures and respectableness of a life in the woods or on the borders. I do not mean to say that all you have heard is not true, but different tempers call for different employments. You have taken to your bosom, there, a good and kind child, and it has become your duty to consider her, as well as yourself, in setting forth in life. You are little given to skirting the settlements, but to my poor judgment the girl would be more like a flourishing flower in the sun of a clearing than in the winds of the prairie. Therefore forget anything you may have heard from me, which is nevertheless true, and turn your mind on the ways of the inner country."

Paul could only answer with a squeeze that would have brought tears to the eyes of most men, but which produced no other effect on the indurated muscles of the other than to make him laugh and nod, as if he received the same as a pledge that the bee-hunter would remember his advice.

The trapper then turned away from his rough but warm-hearted companion, and, having called Hector from the boat, he seemed anxious still to utter a few words more.

"Captain," he at length resumed, "I know when a poor man talks of credit, he deals in a delicate word, according to the fashions of the world; and when an old man talks of life, he speaks of that which he may never see; nevertheless, there is one thing I will say, and that is not so much on my own behalf as on that of another person. Here is Hector, a good and faithful pup, that has long outlived the time of a dog; and, like his master, he looks more to comfort now than to any deeds in running. But the creature has his feelings as well as a Christian. He has consorted latterly with his kinsman there, in such a sort as to find great pleasure in his company, and I will acknowledge that it touches my feelings to part the pair so soon. If you will set a value on your hound, I will endeavor to send it to you in the spring, more especially should them same traps come safe to hand; or, if you dislike parting with the animal altogether, I will just ask you for his loan through the winter. I think I can see my pup will not last beyond that time, for I have judgment in these matters, since many is the friend, both hound and red-skin, that I have seen depart in my day, though the Lord hath not yet seen fit to order his angels to sound forth my name."

"Take him, take him," cried Middleton; "take all, or anything!"

The old man whistled the younger dog to the land, and then he proceeded to the final adieu. Little was said on either side. The trapper took each person solemnly by the hand, and uttered something friendly and kind to all. Middleton was perfectly speechless, and was driven to affect busying himself among the baggage. Paul whistled with all his might, and even Obed took his leave with an effort that bore the appearance of desperate philosophical resolution. When he had made the circuit of the whole, the old man, with his own hands, shoved the boat

into the current, wishing God to speed them. Not a word was spoken, nor a stroke of the oar given, until the travelers had floated past a knoll that hid the trapper from their view. He was last seen standing on the low point, leaning on his rifle, with Hector crouched at his feet, and the younger dog frisking along the sands, in the playfulness of youth and vigor.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE water-courses were at their height, and the boat went down the swift current like a bird. The passage proved prosperous and speedy. In less than a third of the time that would have been necessary for the same journey by land, it was accomplished by the favor of those rapid rivers. Issuing from one stream into another, as the veins of the human body communicate with the larger channels of life, they soon entered the grand artery of the western waters, and landed safely at the very door of the father of Inez.

The joy of Don Augustin, and the embarrassment of the worthy Father Ignatius, may be imagined. The former wept and returned thanks to heaven; the latter returned thanks, and did not weep. The mild provincials were too happy to raise any questions on the character of so joyful a restoration; and, by a sort of general consent, it soon came to be an admitted opinion that the bride of Middleton had been kidnapped by a villain, and that she was restored to her friends by human agency. There were, as respects this belief, certainly a few skeptics, but then they enjoyed their doubts in private, with that species of sublimated and solitary gratification that a miser finds in gazing at his growing but useless hoards.

In order to give the worthy priest something to employ his mind, Middleton made him the instrument of uniting Paul and Ellen. The former consented to the ceremony because he found that all his friends laid great stress on the matter; but

shortly after he led his bride into the plains of Kentucky, under the pretense of paying certain customary visits to sundry members of the family of Hover. While there, he took occasion to have the marriage properly solemnized by a justice of the peace of his acquaintance, in whose ability to forge the nuptial chain he had much more faith than in that of all the gownsmen within the pale of Rome. Ellen, who appeared conscious that some extraordinary preventives might prove necessary to keep one of so erratic a temper as her husband within the proper matrimonial boundaries, raised no objections to these double knots, and all parties were contented.

The local importance Middleton had acquired by his union with the daughter of so affluent a proprietor as Don Augustin, united to his personal merit, attracted the attention of the government. He was soon employed in various situations of responsibility and confidence, which both served to elevate his character in the public estimation and to afford the means of patronage. The bee-hunter was among the first of those to whom he saw fit to extend his favor. It was far from difficult to find situations suited to the abilities of Paul, in the state of society that existed three-and-twenty years ago in those regions. The efforts of Middleton and Inez in behalf of her husband were warmly and sagaciously seconded by Ellen, and they succeeded, in process of time, in working a great and beneficial change in his character. He soon became a landholder, then a prosperous cultivator of the soil, and shortly after a town officer. By that progressive change in fortunes which in the republic is often seen to be as singularly accompanied by a corresponding improvement in knowledge and self-respect, he went on from step to step, until his wife enjoyed the maternal delight of seeing her children placed far beyond the dangers of returning to that state from which both their parents had issued.

Paul is actually at this moment a member of the lower branch of the Legislature of the State where he has long resided; and he is even notorious for making

speeches that have a tendency to put that deliberative body in good-humor, and which, as they are based on great practical knowledge suited to the condition of the country, possess a merit that is much wanted in many more subtle and fine-spun theories that are daily heard, in similar assemblies, to issue from the lips of certain instinctive politicians. But all these happy fruits were the results of much care, and of a long period of time. Middleton, who fills, with a credit better suited to the difference in their educations, a seat in a far higher branch of legislative authority, is the source from which we have derived most of the intelligence necessary to compose our legend. In addition to what he has related of Paul, and of his own continued happiness, he has added a short narrative of what took place on a subsequent visit to the prairies, with which, as we conceive it a suitable termination to what has gone before, we shall judge it wise to conclude our labors.

In the autumn of the year that succeeded the season in which the preceding events occurred, the young man, still in the military service, found himself on the waters of the Missouri, at a point not far remote from the Pawnee towns. Released from any immediate calls of duty, and strongly urged to the measure by Paul, who was in his company, he determined to take horse, and cross the country to visit the partisan, and to inquire into the fate of his friend the trapper. As his train was suited to his functions and rank, the journey was effected with privations and hardships that are the accompaniments of all traveling in a wild, but without any of those dangers and alarms that marked his former passage through the same regions. When within a proper distance, he dispatched an Indian runner, belonging to a friendly tribe, to announce the approach of himself and party, continuing his route at a deliberate pace, in order that the intelligence might, as was customary, precede his arrival. To the surprise of the travelers, their message was unanswered. Hour succeeded hour, and mile after mile was passed, without bringing either the signs of an

honorable reception or the more simple assurances of a friendly welcome. At length the cavalcade, at whose head rode Middleton and Paul, descended from the elevated plain, on which they had long been journeying, to a luxuriant bottom, that brought them to the level of the village of the Loups. The sun was beginning to fall, and a sheet of golden light was spread over the placid plain, lending to its even surface those glorious tints and hues that the human imagination is apt to conceive form the embellishment of still more imposing scenes. The verdure of the year yet remained, and herds of horses and mules were grazing peacefully in the vast natural pasture, under the keeping of vigilant Pawnee boys. Paul pointed out among them the well-known form of Asinus, sleek, fat, and luxuriating in the fullness of content, as he stood with reclining ears and closed eyelids, seemingly musing on the exquisite nature of his present indolent enjoyment.

The route of the party led them at on great distance from one of those watchful youths who was charged with a trust heavy as the principal wealth of his tribe. He heard the trampling of the horses, and cast his eye aside, but, instead of manifesting curiosity or alarm, his look instantly returned whence it had been withdrawn, to the spot where the village was known to stand.

"There is something remarkable in all this," muttered Middleton, half offended at what he conceived to be not only a slight to his rank, but offensive to himself personally; "yonder boy has heard of our approach, or he would not fail to notify his tribe; and yet he scarcely deigns to favor us with a glance. Look to your arms, men; it may be necessary to let these savages feel our strength."

"Therein, captain, I think you're in an error," returned Paul; "if honesty is to be met on the prairies at all, you will find it in our old friend, Hard-Heart; neither is an Indian to be judged of by the rules of a white. See! we are not altogether slighted, for here comes a party at last to meet us, though it is a little pitiful as to show and numbers."

Paul was right in both particulars. A group of horsemen were at length seen wheeling around a little copse and advancing across the plain directly towards them. The advance of this party was slow and dignified. As it drew nigh, the partisan of the Loups was seen at its head, followed by a dozen younger warriors of his tribe. They were all unarmed, nor did they even wear any of those ornaments or feathers which are considered testimonials of respect to the guest an Indian receives, as well as evidence of his own importance.

The meeting was friendly, though a little restrained on both sides. Middleton, jealous of his own consideration, no less than of the authority of his government, suspected some undue influence on the part of the agents of the Canadas; and, as he was determined to maintain the authority of which he was the representative, he felt himself constrained to manifest a *hauteur* that he was far from feeling. It was not so easy to penetrate the motives of the Pawnees. Calm, dignified, and yet far from repulsive, they set an example of courtesy, blended with reserve, that many a diplomatist of the most polished court might have striven in vain to imitate.

In this manner the two parties continued their course to the town. Middleton had time, during the remainder of the ride, to revolve in his mind all the probable reasons which his ingenuity could suggest for this strange reception. Although he was accompanied by a regular interpreter, the chiefs made their salutations in a manner that dispensed with his services. Twenty times the captain turned his glance on his former friend, endeavoring to read the expression of his rigid features. But every effort and all conjectures proved equally futile. The eye of Hard-Heart was fixed, composed, and a little anxious; but, as to every other emotion, impenetrable. He neither spoke himself, nor seemed willing to invite discourse in his visitors; it was therefore necessary for Middleton to adopt the patient manners of his companions, and to await the issue for the explanation.

When they entered the town, its inhabitants were seen collected in an open

space, where they were arranged with the customary deference to age and rank. The whole formed a large circle, in the center of which were perhaps a dozen of the principal chiefs. Hard-Heart waved his hand as he approached, and, as the mass of bodies opened, he rode through, followed by his companions. Here they dismounted; and, as the beasts were led apart, the strangers found themselves environed by a thousand grave, composed, but solicitous faces.

Middleton gazed about him in growing concern, for no cry, no song, no shout welcomed him among a people from whom he had so lately parted with regret. His uneasiness, not to say apprehension, was shared by all his followers. Determination and stern resolution began to assume the place of anxiety in every eye, as each man silently felt for his arms and assured himself that his several weapons were in a state for service. But there was no answering symptom of hostility on the part of their hosts. Hard-Heart beckoned for Middleton and Paul to follow, leading the way toward the cluster of forms that occupied the center of the circle. Here the visitors found a solution of all the movements which had given them so much reason for apprehension.

The trapper was placed on a rude seat, which had been made, with studied care, to support his frame in an upright and easy attitude. The first glance of the eye told his former friends that the old man was at length called upon to pay the last tribute of Nature. His eye was glazed, and apparently as devoid of sight as of expression. His features were a little more sunken and strongly marked than formerly; but there all change, so far as exterior was concerned, might be said to have ceased. His approaching end was not to be ascribed to any positive disease, but had been a gradual and mild decay of the physical powers. Life, it is true, still lingered in his system; but it was as if at times entirely ready to depart, and then it would appear to reanimate the sinking form, reluctant to give up the possession of a tenement that had never been corrupted by vice or undermined by dis-

ease. It would have been no violent fancy to have imagined that the spirit fluttered about the placid lips of the old woodsman, reluctant to depart from a shell that had so long given it an honest and honorable shelter.

His body was placed so as to let the light of the setting sun fall full upon the solemn features. His head was bare, the long, thin locks of gray fluttering lightly in the evening breeze. His rifle lay upon his knee, and the other accouterments of the chase were placed at his side, within reach of his hand. Between his feet lay the figure of a hound, with its head crouching to the earth, as if it slumbered; and so perfectly easy and natural was its position, that a second glance was necessary to tell Middleton he saw only the skin of Hector, stuffed, by Indian tenderness and ingenuity, in a manner to represent the living animal. His own dog was playing at a distance with the child of Tachechana and Mahtoree. The mother herself stood at hand, holding in her arms a second offspring, that might boast of a parentage no less honorable than that which belonged to the son of Hard-Heart. Le Balafré was seated nigh the dying trapper, with every mark about his person that the hour of his own departure was not far distant. The rest of those immediately in the center were aged men, who had apparently drawn near in order to observe the manner in which a just and fearless warrior would depart on the greatest of his journeys.

The old man was reaping the rewards of a life remarkable for temperance and activity, in a tranquil and placid death. His vigor in a manner endured to the very last. Decay, when it did occur, was rapid but free from pain. He had hunted with the tribe in the spring, and even throughout most of the summer; when his limbs suddenly refused to perform their customary offices. A sympathizing weakness took possession of all his faculties; and the Pawnees believed they that were going to lose, in this unexpected manner, a sage and counselor whom they had begun both to love and respect. But, as we have already said, the immortal occupant

seemed unwilling to desert its tenement. The lamp of life flickered, without becoming extinguished. On the morning of the day on which Middleton arrived there was a general reviving of the powers of the whole man. His tongue was again heard in wholesome maxims, and his eye, from time to time recognized the persons of his friends. It merely proved to be a brief and final intercourse with the world, on the part of one who had already been considered, as to mental communion, to have taken his leave of it forever.

When he had placed his guests in front of the dying man, Hard-Heart, after a pause, that proceeded as much from sorrow as decorum, leaned a little forward, and demanded:

"Does my father hear the words of his son?"

"Speak," returned the trapper, in tones that issued from his chest, but which were rendered awfully distinct by the stillness that reigned in the place. "I am about to depart from the village of the Loups, and shortly shall be beyond the reach of your voice."

"Let the wise chief have no cares for his journey," continued Hard-Heart, with an earnest solicitude that led him to forget for the moment that others were waiting to address his adopted parent; "a hundred Loups shall clear his path from briers."

"Pawnee, I die as I have lived, a Christian man!" resumed the trapper, with a force of voice that had the same startling effect on his hearers as is produced by the trumpet, when its blast rises suddenly and freely on the air, after its obstructed sounds have been heard struggling in the distance; "as I came into life so will I leave it. Horses and arms are not needed to stand in the presence of the Great Spirit of my people. He knows my color, and according to my gifts will he judge my deeds."

"My father will tell my young men how many Mingoes he has struck, and what acts of valor and justice he has done, that they may know how to imitate him."

"A boastful tongue is not heard in the heaven of a white man!" solemnly re-

turned the old man. "What I have done he has seen. His eyes are always open. That which has been well done will he remember; wherein I have been wrong will he not forget to chastise, though he will do the same in mercy. No, my son; a pale-face may not sing his own praises, and hope to have them acceptable before his God!"

A little disappointed, the young partisan stepped modestly back, making way for the recent comers to approach. Middleton took one of the meager hands of the trapper, and, struggling to command his voice, he succeeded in announcing his presence.

The old man listened like one whose thoughts were dwelling on a very different subject; but, when the other had succeeded in making him understand that he was present, an expression of joyful recognition passed over his faded features.

"I hope you have not so soon forgotten those whom you so materially served!" Middleton concluded. "It would pain me to think my hold on your memory was so light."

"Little that I have ever seen is forgotten," returned the trapper: "I am at the close of many weary days, but there is not one among them all that I could wish to overlook. I remember you with the whole of your company; ay, and your gran'ther, that went before you. I am glad that you have come back upon these plains, for I had need of one who speaks English, since little faith can be put in the traders of these regions. Will you do a favor to an old and dying man?"

"Name it," said Middleton; "it shall be done."

"It is a far journey to send such trifles," resumed the old man, who spoke at short intervals, as strength and breath permitted, "a far and weary journey is the same, but kindnesses and friendships are things not to be forgotten. There is a settlement among the Otsego hills——"

"I know the place," interrupted Middleton, observing that he spoke with increasing difficulty; "proceed to tell me what you would have done."

"Take this rifle, pouch, and horn, and

send them to the person whose name is graven on the plates of the stock—a trader cut the letters with his knife—for it is long that I have intended to send him such a token of my love."

"It shall be so. Is there more that you could wish?"

"Little else have I to bestow. My traps I give to my Indian son; for honestly and kindly has he kept his faith. Let him stand before me."

Middleton explained to the chief what the trapper had said, and relinquished his own place to the other.

"Pawnee," continued the old man, always changing his language to suit the person he addressed, and not unfrequently according to the ideas he expressed, "it is a custom of my people for the father to leave his blessing with the son before he shuts his eyes forever. This blessing I give to you; take it; for the prayers of a Christian man will never make the path of a just warrior to the blessed prairies either longer or more tangled! May the God of a white man look on your deeds with friendly eyes, and may you never commit an act that shall cause him to darken his face. I know not whether we shall ever meet again. There are many traditions concerning the place of Good Spirits. It is not for one like me, old and experienced though I am, to set up my opinions against a nation's. You believe in the blessed prairies, and I have faith in the sayings of my fathers. If both are true our parting will be final; but, if it should prove that the same meaning is hid under different words, we shall yet stand together, Pawnee, before the face of your Wahcondah, who will then be no other than my God. There is much to be said in favor of both religions, for each seems suited to its own people, and no doubt it was so intended. I fear I have not altogether followed the gifts of my color, inasmuch as I find it a little painful to give up forever the use of the rifle and the comforts of the chase. But then the fault has been my own, seeing that it could not have been his. Ay, Hector," he continued, leaning forward a little, and feeling for the ears of the hound, "our

parting has come at last, dog, and it will be a long hunt. You have been an honest, and a bold, and a faithful hound. Pawnee, you cannot slay the pup on my grave, for where a Christian dog falls, there he lies forever; but you must be kind to him after I am gone, for the love you bear his master."

"The words of my father are in my ears," returned the young partisan, making a grave and respectful gesture of assent.

"Do you hear what the chief has promised, dog?" demanded the trapper, making an effort to attract the notice of the insensible effigy of his hound. Receiving no answering look, nor hearing any friendly whine, the old man felt for the mouth, and endeavored to force his hand between the cold lips. The truth then flashed upon him, although he was far from perceiving the whole extent of the deception. Falling back in his seat, he hung his head, like one who felt a severe and unexpected shock. Profiting by this momentary forgetfulness, two young Indians removed the skin with the same delicacy of feeling that had induced them to attempt the pious fraud.

"The dog is dead!" muttered the trapper, after a pause of many minutes; "a hound has his time as well as a man; and well has he filled his days!—Captain," he added, making an effort to wave his hand to Middleton, "I am glad you have come, for though kind and well-meaning according to the gifts of their color, these Indians are not the men to lay the head of a white man in his grave. I have been thinking, too, of this dog at my feet; it will not do to set forth the opinion that a Christian can expect to meet his hound again; still there can be little harm in placing what is left of so faithful a servant nigh the bones of his master."

"It shall be as you desire."

"I am glad you think with me in this matter. In order, then, to save labor, lay the pup at my feet; or, for that matter, put him side by side. A hunter need never be ashamed to be found in company with his dog!"

"I charge myself with your wish."

The old man made a long and apparently a musing pause. At times he raised his eyes wistfully, as if he would again address Middleton, but some innate feeling appeared always to suppress his words. The other, who observed his hesitation, inquired, in a way most likely to encourage him to proceed, whether there was aught else that he could wish to have done.

"I am without kith or kin in the wide world!" the trapper answered; "when I am gone there will be an end of my race. We have never been chiefs; but honest and useful in our way I hope it cannot be denied we have always proved ourselves. My father lies buried near the sea, and the bones of his son will whiten on the prairies——"

"Name the spot, and your remains shall be placed by the side of your father," interrupted Middleton.

"Not so, not so, captain. Let me sleep where I have lived—beyond the din of the settlements! Still I see no need why the grave of an honest man should be hid, like a red-skin in his ambushment. I paid a man in the settlements to make and put a graven stone at the head of my father's resting-place. It was of the value of twelve beaver-skins, and cunningly and curiously was it carved! Then it told to all comers that the body of such a Christian lay beneath; and it spoke of his manner of life, of his years, and of his honesty. When we had done with the Frenchers in the old war, I made a journey to the spot, in order to see that all was rightly performed, and glad I am to say, the workman had not forgotten his faith."

"And such a stone you would have at your grave?"

"I! no, no; I have no son but Hard-Heart, and it is little that an Indian knows of white fashions and usages. Besides, I am his debtor already, seeing it is so little I have done since I have lived in his tribe. The rifle might bring the value of such a thing—but then I know it will give the boy pleasure to hang the piece in his hall, for many is the deer and the bird that he has seen it destroy. No, no, the gun must be sent to him whose name is graven on the lock."

"But there is one who would gladly prove his affection in the way you wish; he who owes you not only his own deliverance from so many dangers, but who inherits a heavy debt of gratitude from his ancestors. The stone shall be put at the head of your grave."

The old man extended his emaciated hand, and gave the other a squeeze of thanks.

"I thought you might be willing to do it, but I was backward in asking the favor," he said, "seeing that you are not of my kin. Put no boastful words on the same, but just the name, the age, and the time of the death, with something from the holy book; no more, no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on 'arth; I need no more."

Middleton intimated his assent, and then followed a pause that was only broken by distant and broken sentences from the dying man. He appeared now to have closed his accounts with the world and to await merely for the final summons to quit it. Middleton and Hard-Heart placed themselves on the opposite sides of his seat, and watched with melancholy solicitude the variations of his countenance. For two hours there was no very sensible alteration. The expression of his faded and time-worn features was that of a calm and dignified repose. From time to time he spoke, uttering some brief sentence in the way of advice, or asking some simple questions concerning those in whose fortunes he still took a friendly interest. During the whole of that solemn and anxious period each individual of the tribe kept his place, in the most self-restrained patience. When the old man spoke all bent their heads to listen; and when his words were uttered, they seemed to ponder on their wisdom and usefulness.

As the flame drew nigher to the socket his voice was hushed, and there were moments when his attendants doubted whether he still belonged to the living. Middleton, who watched each wavering expression of his weather-beaten visage with the interest of a keen observer of human nature, softened by the tenderness

of personal regard, fancied he could read the workings of the old man's soul in the strong lineaments of his countenance. Perhaps what the enlightened soldier took for the delusion of mistaken opinion did actually occur—for who has returned from that unknown world to explain by what forms, and in what manner, he was introduced into its awful precincts? Without pretending to explain what must ever be a mystery to the quick, we shall simply relate facts as they occurred.

The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes alone had occasionally opened and shut. When opened his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds which hung around the western horizon, reflecting the bright colors, and giving form and loveliness to the glorious tints of an American sunset. The hour—the calm beauty of the season—the occasion—all conspired to fill the spectators with solemn awe. Suddenly while musing on the remarkable position in which he was placed, Middleton felt the hand which he held grasp his own with incredible power, and the old man, supported on either side by his friends, rose upright to his feet. For a moment he looked about him, as if to invite all in presence to listen (the lingering remnant of human frailty), and then, with a fine military elevation of the head, and with a voice that might be heard in every part of that numerous assembly, he pronounced the word:

"Here!"

A movement so entirely unexpected, and the air of grandeur and humility which were so remarkably united in the mien of the trapper, together with the clear and uncommon force of his utterance, produced a short period of confusion in the faculties of all present. When Middleton and Hard-Heart, each of whom had involuntarily extended a hand to support the form of the old man, turned to him again they found that the subject of their interests was removed forever beyond the necessity of their care. They mournfully placed the body in its seat, and Le Balafre arose to announce the termination of the scene to the tribe. The voice of the old Indian seemed a sort of echo from that invisible

world to which the meek spirit of the trapper had just departed.

"A valiant, a just and a wise warrior, has gone on the path which will lead him to the blessed grounds of his people!" he said. "When the voice of the Wahcondah called him, he was ready to answer. Go, my children; remember the just chief of the pale-faces, and clear your own tracks from briers!"

The grave was made beneath the shade

of some noble oaks. It has been carefully watched to the present hour by the Pawnees of the Loups, and is often shown to the traveler and the trader as a spot where a just white man sleeps. In due time the stone was placed at its head, with the simple inscription which the trapper had himself requested. The only liberty taken by Middleton was to add—
"May no wanton hand ever disturb his remains!"

THE END OF "THE PRAIRIE."

THE SPY

INTRODUCTION.

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!"

THE author has often been asked if there were any foundation in real life for the delineation of the principal character in this book. He can give no clearer answer to the question than by laying before his readers a simple statement of the facts connected with its original publication.

Many years since, the writer of this volume was at the residence of an illustrious man, who had been employed in various situations of high trust during the darkest days of the American revolution. The discourse turned upon the effects which great political excitement produces on character, and the purifying consequences of a love of country, when that sentiment is powerfully and generally awakened in a people. He who, from his years, his services, and his knowledge of men, was best qualified to take the lead in such a conversation, was the principal speaker. After dwelling on the marked manner in which the great struggle of the nation, during the war of 1775, had given a new and honorable direction to the thoughts and practices of multitudes whose time had formerly been engrossed by the most vulgar concerns of life, he illustrated his opinions by relating an anecdote, the truth of which he could attest as a personal witness.

The dispute between England and the United States of America, though not strictly a family quarrel, had many of the features of a civil war. The people of the

latter were never properly and constitutionally subject to the people of the former, but the inhabitants of both countries owed allegiance to a common king. The Americans, as a nation, disavowed this allegiance, and the English choosing to support their sovereign in the attempt to regain his power, most of the feelings of an internal struggle were involved in the conflict. A large proportion of the emigrants from Europe, then established in the colonies, took part with the crown, and there were many districts in which their influence, united to that of the Americans who refused to lay aside their allegiance, gave a decided preponderance to the royal cause. America was then too young, and too much in need of every heart and hand, to regard these partial divisions, small as they were in actual amount, with indifference. The evil was greatly increased by the activity of the English in profiting by these internal dissensions; and it became doubly serious when it was found that attempts were made to raise various corps of provincial troops, which were to be banded with those from Europe, to reduce the young republic to subjection. Congress named an especial and a secret committee, therefore, for the express purpose of defeating this object. Of this committee, Mr. —, the narrator of the anecdote, was chairman.

In the discharge of the novel duties which now devolved on him, Mr. — had occasion to employ an agent whose services differed but little from those of a common spy. This man, as will easily be understood, belonged to a condition in life which rendered him the least reluctant

to appear in so equivocal a character. He was poor, ignorant, so far as the usual instruction was concerned; but cool, shrewd, and fearless by nature. It was his office to learn in what part of the country the agents of the crown were making their efforts to embody men, to repair to the place, enlist, appear zealous in the cause he affected to serve, and otherwise to get possession of as many of the secrets of the enemy as possible. The last he of course communicated to his employers, who took all the means in their power to counteract the plans of the English, and frequently with success.

It will readily be conceived that a service like this was attended with great personal hazard. In addition to the danger of discovery, there was the daily risk of falling into the hands of the Americans themselves, who invariably visited sins of this nature more severely on the natives of the country than on the Europeans who fell into their hands. In fact, the agent of Mr. — was several times arrested by the local authorities; and, in one instance, he was actually condemned by his exasperated countrymen to the gallows. Speedy and private orders to his jailer alone saved him from an ignominious death. He was permitted to escape; and this seeming, and indeed actual, peril was of great aid in supporting his assumed character among the English. By the Americans, in his little sphere, he was denounced as a bold and inveterate Tory. In this manner he continued to serve his country in secret during the early years of the struggle, hourly environed by danger and the constant subject of unmerited opprobrium.

In the year — Mr. — was named to a high and honorable employment at a European court. Before vacating his seat in Congress, he reported to that body an outline of the circumstances related, necessarily suppressing the name of his agent, and demanding an appropriation in behalf of a man who had been of so much use, at so great risk. A suitable sum was voted, and its delivery was confided to the chairman of the secret committee.

Mr. — took the necessary means to summon his agent to a personal interview. They met in a wood at midnight. Here Mr. — complimented his companion on his fidelity and adroitness; explained the necessity of their communications being closed; and finally tendered the money. The other drew back, and declined receiving it. "The country has need of all its means," he said; "as for myself, I can work, or gain a livelihood in various ways." Persuasion was useless, for patriotism was uppermost in the heart of this remarkable individual; and Mr. — departed, bearing with him the gold he had brought and a deep respect for the man who had so long hazarded his life, unrequited, for the cause they served in common.

The writer is under an impression that at a later day the agent of Mr. — consented to receive a remuneration for what he had done; but it was not until his country was entirely in a condition to bestow it.

It is scarcely necessary to add that an anecdote like this, simply but forcibly told by one of its principal actors, made a deep impression on all who heard it. Many years later, circumstances, which it is unnecessary to relate, and of an entirely adventitious nature, induced the writer to publish a novel which proved to be, what he little foresaw at the time, the first of a tolerably long series. The same adventitious causes which gave birth to the book, determined its scene and its general character. The former was laid in a foreign country, and the latter embraced a crude effort to describe foreign manners. When this tale was published it became a matter of reproach among the author's friends that he, an American in heart as in birth, should give to the world a work which aided perhaps in some slight degree to feed the imaginations of the young and unpracticed among his own countrymen, by pictures drawn from a state of society so different from that to which he belonged. The writer, while he knew how much of what he had done was purely accidental, felt the reproach to be one that, in a measure, was just. As the only atonement in his power, he determined to

inflict a second book, whose subject should admit of no cavil, not only on the world, but on himself. He chose patriotism for his theme; and to those who read this introduction and the book itself, it is scarcely necessary to add that he took the hero of the anecdote just related as the best illustration of his subject.

Since the original publication of "The Spy," there have appeared several accounts of different persons who are supposed to have been in the author's mind while writing the book. As Mr. — did not mention the name of his agent, the writer never knew any more of his identity with this or that individual than has been here explained. Both Washington and Sir Henry Clinton had an unusual number of secret emissaries; in a war that partook so much of a domestic character, and in which the contending parties were people of the same blood and language, it could scarcely be otherwise.

The style of the book has been revised by the author in this edition. In this respect, he has endeavored to make it more worthy of the favor with which it has been received, though he is compelled to admit there are faults so interwoven with the structure of the tale that, as in the case of a decayed edifice, it would cost perhaps less to reconstruct than to repair. Five and twenty years have been as ages with most things connected with America. Among other advances, that of her literature has not been the least. So little was expected from the publication of an original work of this description at the time it was written, that the first volume of "The Spy" was actually printed several months before the author felt a sufficient inducement to write a line of the second. The efforts expended on a hopeless task are rarely worthy of him who makes them, however low it may be necessary to rate the standard of his general merit.

One other anecdote, connected with the history of this book, may give the reader

some idea of the hopes of an American author, in the first quarter of the present century. As the second volume was slowly printing, from manuscript that was barely dry when it went into the compositors' hands, the publisher intimated that the work might grow to a length that would consume the profits. To set his mind at rest, the last chapter was actually written, printed and paged several weeks before the chapters which precede it were even thought of. This circumstance, while it cannot excuse, may serve to explain the manner in which the actors are hurried off the scene.

A great change has come over the country since this book was originally written. The nation is passing from the gristle into the bone, and the common mind is beginning to keep even pace with the growth of the body politic. The march from Vera Cruz to Mexico was made under the orders of that gallant soldier who, a quarter of a century before, was mentioned with honor in the last chapter of this very book. Glorious as was that march, and brilliant as were its results in a military point of view, a stride was then made by the nation, in a moral sense, that has hastened it by an age in its progress toward real independence and high political influence. The guns that filled the valley of the Aztecs with their thunder have been heard in echoes on the other side of the Atlantic, producing equally hope or apprehension.

There is now no enemy to fear, but the one that resides within. By accustoming ourselves to regard even the people as erring beings, and by using the restraints that wisdom has adduced from experience, there is much reason to hope that the same Providence which has so well aided us in our infancy, may continue to smile on our manhood.

COOPERSTOWN, March 29, 1849.

CHAPTER I.

And though amidst the calm of thought entire,
 Some high and haughty features might betray
 A soul impetuous once—'twas earthly fire
 That fled composure's intellectual ray,
 As *Ætna's* fires grow dim before the rising day.
 —GERTRUDE OF WYOMING.

It was near the close of the year 1780 that a solitary traveler was seen pursuing his way through one of the numerous little valleys of Westchester.* The easterly wind, with its chilling dampness, and increasing violence, gave unerring notice of the approach of a storm, which, as usual, might be expected to continue for several days; and the experienced eye of the traveler was turned in vain, through the darkness of the evening, in quest of some convenient shelter in which, for the term of his confinement by the rain that already began to mix with the atmosphere in a thick mist, he might obtain such accommodations as his purposes required. Nothing, however, offered but the small and inconvenient tenements of the lower order of the inhabitants, with whom, in that immediate neighborhood, he did not think it either safe or politic to trust himself.

The county of Westchester, after the British had obtained possession of the island of New York,† became common ground, in which both parties continued to act for the remainder of the war of the revolution. A large proportion of its inhabitants, either restrained by their attachments or influenced by their fears, affected a neutrality they did not feel. The lower towns were, of course, more

particularly under the dominion of the crown, while the upper, finding a security from the vicinity of the continental troops, were bold in asserting their revolutionary opinions and their right to govern themselves. Great numbers, however, wore masks, which even to this day have not been thrown aside; and many an individual has gone down to the tomb, stigmatized as a foe to the rights of his countrymen, while, in secret, he has been the useful agent of the leaders of the revolution; and, on the other hand, could the hidden repositories of divers flaming patriots have been opened to the light of day, royal protections would have been discovered concealed under piles of British gold.

At the sound of the tread of the noble horse ridden by the traveler, the mistress of the farm-house he was passing at the time might be seen cautiously opening the door of the building to examine the stranger; and perhaps, with an averted face, communicating the result of her observations to her husband, who, in the rear of the building, was prepared to seek, if necessary, his ordinary place of concealment in the adjacent woods. The valley was situated about midway in the length of the county, and was sufficiently near to both armies to make the restitution of stolen goods no uncommon occurrence in that vicinity. It is true, the same articles were not always regained; but a summary substitute was generally resorted to, in the absence of legal justice, which restored to the loser the amount of his loss, and frequently with no inconsiderable addition for the temporary use of his property. In short, the law was momentarily extinct in that particular district, and justice was administered subject to the bias of personal interests and the passions of the strongest.

The passage of a stranger, with an appearance of somewhat doubtful character, and mounted on an animal which, although unfurnished with any of the ordinary trappings of war, partook largely of the bold and upright carriage that distinguished his rider, gave rise to many surmises among the gazing inmates of the

* As each State of the American Union has its own counties, it often happens that there are several which bear the same name. The scene of this tale is in New York, whose county of Westchester is the nearest adjoining to the city.

† The city of New York is situated on an island called Manhattan; but it is, at one point, separated from the county of Westchester by a creek of only a few feet in width. The bridge at this point is called King's Bridge. It was the scene of many skirmishes during the war, and is alluded to in this tale. Every Manhattanese knows the difference between "Manhattan Island" and "the island of Manhattan." The first is applied to a small district in the vicinity of Corlear's Hook, while the last embraces the whole island; or the city and county of New York, as it is termed in the laws.

different habitations; and in some instances, where conscience was more than ordinarily awake, to no little alarm.

Tired with the exercise of a day of unusual fatigue, and anxious to obtain a speedy shelter from the increasing violence of the storm, that now began to change its character to large drops of driving rain, the traveler determined, as a matter of necessity, to make an application for admission at the next dwelling that offered. An opportunity was not long wanting; and, riding through a pair of neglected bars, he knocked loudly at the outer door of a building, of a very humble exterior, without quitting his saddle. A female of middle age, with an outward bearing but little more prepossessing than that of her dwelling, appeared to answer the summons. The startled woman half closed her door again in affright, as she saw, by the glare of a large wood fire, a mounted man so unexpectedly near its threshold; and an expression of terror mingled with her natural curiosity as she required his pleasure.

Although the day was too nearly closed to admit of a minute scrutiny of the accommodations within, enough had been seen to cause the horseman to endeavor, once more, to penetrate the gloom, with longing eyes, in search of a more promising roof, before, with an ill-concealed reluctance, he stated his necessities and wishes. His request was listened to with evident unwillingness, and, while yet unfinished, it was eagerly interrupted by the reply:

"I can't say I like to give lodgings to a stranger in these ticklish times," said the female, in a pert, sharp key; "I'm nothing but a forlorn lone body; or, what's the same thing, there's nobody but the old gentleman at home; but a half mile further up the road is a house where you can get entertainment, and that for nothing. I am sure 'twill be much convenientier to them, and more agreeable to me; because, as I said before, Harvey is away—I wish he'd take advice, and leave off wandering; he's well to do in the world, by this time; and he ought to leave off his uncertain courses, and settle himself handsomely in life, like other men of his years and prop-

erty. But Harvey Birch will have his own way, and die vagabond after all!"

The horseman did not wait to hear more than the advice to pursue his course up the road; but he had slowly turned his horse toward the bars, and was gathering the folds of an ample cloak around his manly form, preparatory to facing the storm again, when something in the speech of the female suddenly arrested the movement.

"Is this, then, the dwelling of Harvey Birch?" he inquired, in an involuntary manner, apparently checking himself as he was about to utter more.

"Why, one can hardly say it is his dwelling," replied the other, drawing a hurried breath, like one eager to answer; "he is never in it, or so seldom, that I hardly remember his face, when he does think it worth his while to show it to his poor old father and me. But it matters little to me, I'm sure, if he ever comes back again or not;—turn in the first gate on your left—no, I care but little, for my part, whether Harvey ever shows his face again or not—not I;" and she closed the door abruptly on the horseman, who gladly extended his ride a half-mile further, to obtain lodgings which promised both more comfort and greater security.

Sufficient light yet remained to enable the traveler to distinguish the improvements* which had been made in the cultivation, and in the general appearance of the grounds around the building to which he was now approaching. The house was of stone, long, low and with a small wing at each extremity. A piazza, extending along the front, with neatly turned pillars of wood, together with the good order and preservation of the fences and out-buildings, gave the place an air altogether superior to the common farm-houses of the country. After leading his horse behind an angle of the wall, where it was in some degree protected from the wind and rain, the traveler threw his

* Improvements is used by the Americans to express every degree of change in converting land from its state of wilderness to that of cultivation. In this meaning of the word it is an improvement to fell the trees; and it is valued precisely by the supposed amount of the cost.

valise over his arm, and knocked loudly at the entrance of the building for admission. An aged black soon appeared; and without seeming to think it necessary under the circumstances to consult his superiors—first taking one prying look at the applicant by the light of the candle in his hand—he acceded to the request for accommodations. The traveler was shown into an extremely neat parlor, where a fire had been lighted to cheer the dullness of an easterly storm and an October evening. After giving the valise into the keeping of his civil attendant, and politely repeating his request to the old gentleman who arose to receive him, and paying his compliments to the three ladies who were seated at work with their needles, the stranger commenced laying aside some of the outer garments which he had worn in his ride.

On taking an extra handkerchief from his neck, and removing a cloak of blue cloth, with a surtout of the same material, he exhibited to the scrutiny of the observant family party a tall and extremely graceful person, of apparently fifty years of age. His countenance evinced a settled composure and dignity; his nose was straight, and approaching to Grecian; his eye, of a gray color, was quiet, thoughtful, and rather melancholy; the mouth and lower part of his face being expressive of decision and much character. His dress, being suited to the road, was simple and plain, but such as was worn by the higher class of his countrymen; he wore his own hair, dressed in a manner that gave a military air to his appearance, and which was rather heightened by his erect and conspicuously graceful carriage. His whole appearance was so impressive and so decidedly that of a gentleman, that, as he finished laying aside the garments, the ladies arose from their seats, and together, with the master of the house, they received anew, and returned the complimentary greetings which were again offered.

The host was by several years the senior of the traveler, and by his manner, dress, and everything around him, showed he

had seen much of life, and the best of society. The ladies were, a maiden of forty, and two much younger, who did not seem, indeed, to have reached half those years. The bloom of the elder of these ladies had vanished, but her eyes and fine hair gave an extremely agreeable expression to her countenance; and there was a softness and affability in her deportment that added a charm many more juvenile faces do not possess. The sisters, for such the resemblance between the younger females denoted them to be, were in all the pride of youth, and the roses, so eminently the property of the Westchester fair, glowed on their cheeks, and lighted their deep blue eyes with that luster which gives so much pleasure to the beholder, and which indicates so much internal innocence and peace. There was much of that feminine delicacy, in the appearance of the three, which distinguishes the sex in this country; and, like the gentleman, their demeanor proved them to be women of the higher order of life.

After handing a glass of excellent Madeira to his guest, Mr. Wharton, for so was the owner of this retired estate called, resumed his seat by the fire, with another in his own hand. For a moment he paused, as if debating with his politeness, but at length threw an inquiring glance on the stranger, as he inquired:

"To whose health am I to have the honor of drinking?"

The traveler had also seated himself, and he sat unconsciously gazing on the fire while Mr. Wharton spoke; turning his eyes slowly on his host with a look of close observation, he replied, while a faint tinge gathered on his features:

"Mr. Harper."

"Mr. Harper," resumed the other, with the formal precision of the day, "I have the honor to drink your health, and to hope you will sustain no injury from the rain to which you have been exposed."

Mr. Harper bowed in silence to the compliment, and he soon resumed the meditations from which he had been interrupted, and for which the long ride he had that day made, in the wind, might seem a very natural apology.

The young ladies had again taken their seats beside the work-stand, while their aunt, Miss Jeanette Peyton, withdrew, to superintend the preparations necessary to appease the hunger of their unexpected visitor. A short silence prevailed, during which Mr. Harper was apparently enjoying the change in his situation, when Mr. Wharton again broke it, by inquiring whether smoke was disagreeable to his companion; to which, receiving an answer in the negative, he immediately resumed the pipe which had been laid aside at the entrance of the traveler.

There was an evident desire on the part of the host to enter into conversation, but either from an apprehension of treading on dangerous ground, or an unwillingness to intrude upon the rather studied taciturnity of his guest, he several times hesitated, before he could venture to make any further remark. At length, a movement from Mr. Harper, as he raised his eyes to the party in the room, encouraged him to proceed.

"I find it very difficult," said Mr. Wharton, cautiously avoiding, at first, such subjects as he wished to introduce, "to procure that quality of tobacco for my evenings' amusement to which I have been accustomed."

"I should think the shops in New York might furnish the best in the country," calmly rejoined the other.

"Why—yes," returned the host, in rather a hesitating manner, lifting his eyes to the face of Harper, and lowering them quickly under his steady look; "there must be plenty in town; but the war has made communication with the city, however innocent, too dangerous to be risked for so trifling an article as tobacco."

The box from which Mr. Wharton had just taken a supply for his pipe was lying open, within a few inches of the elbow of Harper, who took a small quantity from its contents, and applied it to his tongue, in a manner perfectly natural, but one that filled his companion with alarm. Without, however, observing that the quality was of the most approved kind, the traveler relieved his host by relapsing again into his meditations. Mr. Wharton

now felt unwilling to lose the advantage he had gained, and, making an effort of more than usual vigor, he continued:

"I wish from the bottom of my heart this unnatural struggle was over, that we might again meet our friends and relatives in peace and love."

"It is much to be desired," said Harper, emphatically, again raising his eyes to the countenance of his host.

"I hear of no movement of consequence, since the arrival of our new allies," said Mr. Wharton, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and turning his back to the other, under the pretense of receiving a coal from his youngest daughter.

"None have yet reached the public, I believe."

"Is it thought any important steps are about to be taken?" continued Mr. Wharton, still occupied with his daughter, yet unconsciously suspending his employment, in expectation of a reply.

"Is it intimated any are in agitation?"

"Oh, nothing in particular; but it is natural to expect some new enterprise from so powerful a force as that under Rochambeau."

Harper made an assenting inclination with his head, but no other reply, to this remark; while Mr. Wharton, after lighting his pipe, resumed the subject.

"They appear more active in the South; Gates and Cornwallis seem willing to bring the war to an issue, there."

The brow of Harper contracted, and a deeper shade of melancholy crossed his features; his eye kindled with a transient beam of fire that spoke a latent source of deep feeling. The admiring gaze of the younger of the sisters had barely time to read its expression before it passed away, leaving in its room the acquired composure which marked the countenance of the stranger, and that impressive dignity which so conspicuously denotes the empire of reason.

The elder sister made one or two movements in her chair, before she ventured to say, in a tone which partook in no small measure of triumph:

"General Gates has been less fortunate

with the Earl than with General Burgoyne."

"But General Gates is an Englishman, Sarah," cried the younger lady, with quickness; then, coloring to the eyes at her own boldness, she employed herself in tumbling over the contents of her work-basket, silently hoping that the remark would be unnoticed.

The traveler had turned his face from one sister to the other, as they had spoken in succession, and an almost imperceptible movement of the muscles of the mouth betrayed a new emotion as he playfully inquired of the younger:

"May I venture to ask what inference you would draw from that fact?"

Frances blushed yet deeper at this direct appeal to her opinions upon a subject upon which she had incautiously spoken in the presence of a stranger; but, finding an answer necessary, after some little hesitation, and with a good deal of stammering in her manner, she replied:

"Only—only—sir—my sister and myself sometimes differ in our opinions of the prowess of the British." A smile of much meaning played on a face of infantile innocence, as she concluded.

"On what particular points of their prowess do you differ?" continued Harper, meeting her look of animation with a smile of almost paternal softness.

"Sarah thinks the British are never beaten, while I do not put so much faith in their invincibility."

The traveler listened to her with that pleased indulgence with which virtuous age loves to contemplate the ardor of youthful innocence; but, making no reply, he turned to the fire, and continued for some time gazing on its embers, in silence.

Mr. Wharton had in vain endeavored to pierce the disguise of his guest's political feelings; but while there was nothing forbidding in his countenance, there was nothing communicative; on the contrary, it was strikingly reserved; and the master of the house arose, in profound ignorance of what, in those days, was the most material point in the character of his guest, to lead the way into another room,

and to the supper-table. Mr. Harper offered his hand to Sarah Wharton, and they entered the room together; while Frances followed, greatly at a loss to know whether she had not wounded the feelings of her father's inmate.

The storm began to rage with great violence without; and the dashing rain on the sides of the building awakened that silent sense of enjoyment which is excited by such sounds in a room of quiet comfort and warmth, when a loud summons at the outer door again called the faithful black to the portal. In a minute the servant returned, and informed his master that another traveler, overtaken by the storm, desired to be admitted to the house for a shelter through the night.

At the first sounds of the impatient summons of this new applicant, Mr. Wharton had risen from his seat in evident uneasiness; and, with eyes glancing with quickness from his guest to the door of the room, he seemed to be expecting something to proceed from this second interruption, connected with the stranger who had occasioned the first. He scarcely had time to bid the black, with a faint voice, to show this second comer in, before the door was thrown hastily open, and the stranger himself entered the apartment. He paused a moment, as the person of Harper met his view, and then, in a more formal manner, repeated the request he had before made through the servant. Mr. Wharton and his family disliked the appearance of this new visitor excessively; but the inclemency of the weather, and the uncertainty of the consequences, if he were refused the desired lodgings, compelled the old gentleman to give a reluctant acquiescence.

Some of the dishes were replaced by the orders of Miss Peyton, and the weather-beaten intruder was invited to partake of the remains of the repast, from which the party had just risen. Throwing aside a rough great-coat, he very composedly took the offered chair, and unceremoniously proceeded to allay the cravings of an appetite which appeared by no means delicate. But at every mouthful he would turn an unquiet eye on Harper, who

studied his appearance with a closeness of investigation that was very embarrassing to its subject. At length, pouring out a glass of wine, the new-comer nodded significantly to his examiner, previously to swallowing the liquor, and said, with something of bitterness in his manner:

"I drink to our better acquaintance, sir; I believe this is the first time we have met, though your attention would seem to say otherwise."

The quality of the wine seemed greatly to his fancy, for, on replacing the glass upon the table, he gave his lips a smack that resounded through the room; and, taking up the bottle, he held it between himself and the light for a moment in silent contemplation of its clear and brilliant color.

"I think we have never met before, sir," replied Harper, with a slight smile on his features, as he observed the movements of the other; but appearing satisfied with his scrutiny, he turned to Sarah Wharton, who sat next him, and carelessly remarked:

"You, doubtless, find your present abode solitary, after being accustomed to the gayeties of the city?"

"Oh! excessively so," said Sarah, hastily. "I do wish, with my father, that this cruel war was at an end, that we might return to our friends once more."

"And you, Miss Frances, do you long as ardently for peace as your sister?"

"On many accounts I certainly do," returned the other, venturing to steal a timid glance at her interrogator; and, meeting the same benevolent expression of feeling as before, she continued, as her own face lighted into one of its animated and bright smiles of intelligence, "but not at the expense of the rights of my countrymen."

"Rights!" repeated her sister, impatiently, "whose rights can be stronger than those of a sovereign; and what duty is clearer than to obey those who have a natural right to command?"

"None, certainly," said Frances, laughing with great pleasantry; and, taking the hand of her sister affectionately within

both of her own, she added, with a smile directed toward Harper:

"I gave you to understand that my sister and myself differed in our political opinions; but we have an impartial umpire in my father, who loves his own countrymen, and he loves the British—so he takes sides with neither."

"Yes," said Mr. Wharton, in a little alarm, eyeing first one guest and then the other; "I have near friends in both armies, and I dread a victory by either as a source of certain private misfortune."

"I take it you have little reason to apprehend much from the Yankees, in that way," interrupted the guest at the table, coolly helping himself to another glass from the bottle he had admired.

"His Majesty may have more experienced troops than the continentals," answered the host, fearfully, "but the Americans have met with distinguished success."

Harper disregarded the observations of both, and, rising, he desired to be shown to his place of rest. A small boy was directed to guide him to his room; and wishing a courteous good-night to the whole party, the traveler withdrew. The knife and fork fell from the hands of the unwelcome intruder, as the door closed on the retiring figure of Harper; he arose slowly from his seat; listening attentively he approached the door of the room—opened it—seemed to attend to the retreating footsteps of the other—and, amid the panic and astonishment of his companions, he closed it again. In an instant, the red wig which concealed his black locks, the large patch which hid half his face from observation, the stoop that had made him appear fifty years of age, disappeared.

"My father!—my dear father!" cried the handsome young man; "and you, my dearest sisters and aunt!—have I at last met you again?"

"Heaven bless you, my Henry, my son!" exclaimed the astonished but delighted parent; while his sisters sank on his shoulders, dissolved in tears.

The faithful old black, who had been reared from infancy in the house of his

master, and who, as if in mockery of his degraded state, had been complimented with the name of Cæsar, was the only other witness of this unexpected discovery of the son of Mr. Wharton. After receiving the extended hand of his young master, and imprinting on it a fervent kiss, Cæsar withdrew. The boy did not re-enter the room; and the black himself, after some time, returned, just as the young British captain was exclaiming:

"But who is this Mr. Harper?—is he likely to betray me?"

"No—no—no—Massa Harry," cried the negro, shaking his gray head confidently; "I been to see—Massa Harper on he knee—pray to God—no gemman who pray to God, tell of good son, come to see old fader—Skinner do that—no Christian!"

This poor opinion of the Skinners was not confined to Mr. Cæsar Thompson, as he called himself—but Cæsar Wharton, as he was styled by the little world to which he was known. The convenience, and perhaps the necessities, of the leaders of the American arms in the neighborhood of New York, had induced them to employ certain subordinate agents, of extremely irregular habits, in executing their lesser plans of annoying the enemy. It was not a moment for fastidious inquiries into abuses of any description, and oppression and injustice were the natural consequences of the possession of a military power that was uncurbed by the restraints of civil authority. In time, a distinct order of the community was formed, whose sole occupation appears to have been that of relieving their fellow-citizens from any little excess of temporary prosperity they might be thought to enjoy, under the pretense of patriotism, and the love of liberty.

Occasionally, the aid of military authority was not wanting in enforcing these arbitrary distributions of wordly goods; and a petty holder of a commission in the state militia was to be seen giving the sanction of something like legality to acts of the most unlicensed robbery, and sometimes bloodshed.

On the part of the British, the stimulus of loyalty was by no means suffered to

sleep, where so fruitful a field offered on which it might be expended. But their freebooters were enrolled, and their efforts more systematized. Long experience had taught their leaders the efficacy of concentrated force; and, unless tradition does great injustice to their exploits, the result did no little credit to their foresight. The corps—we presume, from their known affection to that useful animal—had received the quaint appellation of "Cow-boys."

Cæsar was, however, far too loyal to associate men who held the commission of George III. with the irregular warriors whose excesses he had so often witnessed, and from whose rapacity neither his poverty nor his bondage had suffered even him to escape uninjured. The Cow-boys, therefore, did not receive their proper portion of the black's censure, when he said no Christian, nothing but a "Skinner," could betray a pious child, while honoring his father with a visit so full of peril.

CHAPTER II.

And many a halcyon day he lived to see
Unbroken, but by one misfortune dire,
When fate had rent his mutual heart—but she
Was gone—and Gertrude climbed a widowed father's knee.

—GERTRUDE OF WYOMING.

THE father of Mr. Wharton was a native of England, and of a family whose parliamentary interest had enabled them to provide for a younger son in the colony of New York. The young man, like hundreds of others in his situation, had settled permanently in the country. He married; and the sole issue of his connection had been sent early in life to receive the benefits of the English schools. After taking his degrees at one of the universities of the mother-country, the youth had been suffered to acquire a knowledge of life with the advantages of European society. But the death of his father recalled him, after passing two years in this manner, to the possession of an honorable name and a very ample estate.

It was much the fashion of that day to

place the youth of certain families in the army or navy of England, as the regular stepping-stones to preferment. Most of the higher offices in the colonies were filled by men who had made arms their profession; and it was even no uncommon sight to see a veteran warrior laying aside the sword to assume the ermine on the benches of the highest judicial authority.

In conformity with this system, the senior Mr. Wharton had intended his son for a soldier; but a natural imbecility of character in his child interfered with his wishes.

A twelvemonth had been spent by the young man in weighing the comparative advantages of the different classes of troops, when the death of his father occurred. The ease of his situation, and the attentions lavished upon a youth in the actual enjoyment of one of the largest estates in the colonies, interfered greatly with his ambitious projects. Love decided the matter; and Mr. Wharton, in becoming a husband, ceased to think of becoming a soldier. For many years he continued happy in his family, and sufficiently respected by his countrymen, as a man of integrity and consequence, when all his enjoyments vanished, as it were, at a blow. His only son, the youth introduced in the preceding chapter, had entered the army and had arrived in his native country, but a short time before the commencement of hostilities, with the re-enforcements the ministry had thought it prudent to throw into the disaffected parts of North America. His daughters were just growing into life, and their education required all the advantages the city could afford. His wife had been for some years in declining health, and had barely time to fold her son to her bosom, and rejoice in the reunion of her family, before the revolution burst forth, in a continued blaze, from Georgia to Massachusetts. The shock was too much for the feeble condition of the mother, who saw her child called to the field to combat against the members of her own family in the South, and she sank under the blow.

There was no part of the continent where the manners of England, and its

aristocratical notions of blood and alliance, prevailed with more force than in a certain circle immediately around the metropolis of New York. The customs of the early Dutch inhabitants had, indeed, blended in some measure with the English manners; but still the latter prevailed. This attachment to Great Britain was increased by the frequent intermarriages of the officers of the mother-country with the wealthier and more powerful families of the vicinity, until, at the commencement of hostilities, their united influence had very nearly thrown the colony into the scale on the side of the crown. A few, however, of the leading families espoused the cause of the people, and a sufficient stand was made against the efforts of the ministerial party, to organize, and aided by the army of the confederation, to maintain, an independent and republican form of government.

The city of New York and the adjacent territory were alone exempted from the rule of the new commonwealth, while the royal authority extended no further than its dignity could be supported by the presence of an army. In this condition of things, the loyalists of influence adopted such measures as best accorded with their different characters and situations. Many bore arms in support of the crown, and, by their bravery and exertions, endeavored to secure what they deemed to be the rights of their prince, and their own estates, from the effects of the law of attainer. Others left the country, seeking in that place they emphatically called home an asylum, as they fondly hoped, for a season only, against the confusion and dangers of a war.

A third, and a more wary portion, remained in the place of their nativity, with a prudent regard to their ample possessions, and, perhaps, influenced by their attachments to the scenes of their youth. Mr. Wharton was of this description. After making a provision against future contingencies, by secretly transmitting the whole of his money to the British funds, this gentleman determined to continue in the theater of strife, and to maintain so strict a neutrality as to insure

the safety of his large estate, whichever party succeeded. He was apparently engrossed in the education of his daughters, when a relation high in office in the new state intimated that a residence in what was now a British camp differed but little, in the eyes of his countrymen, from a residence in the British capital. Mr. Wharton soon saw this was an unpardonable offense in the existing state of things, and he instantly determined to remove the difficulty by retiring to the country. He possessed a residence in the county of Weschester; and having been for many years in the habit of withdrawing thither during the heats of the summer months, it was kept furnished and ready for his accommodation. His eldest daughter was already admitted into the society of women; but Frances, the younger, required a year or two more of the usual cultivation, to appear with proper *éclat*; at least so thought Miss Jeanette Peyton; and as this lady, a younger sister of the deceased mother, had left her paternal home in the colony of Virginia, with the devotedness and affection peculiar to her sex, to superintend the welfare of her nieces, Mr. Wharton felt that her opinions were entitled to respect. In conformity to her advice, therefore, the feelings of the parent were made to yield to the welfare of his children.

Mr. Wharton withdrew to the "Locusts" with a heart rent with the pain of separating from all that was left him of a wife he had adored, but in obedience to a constitutional prudence that pleaded loudly in behalf of his worldly goods. His handsome town residence was uninhabited, in the meanwhile, by his daughters and their aunt. The regiment to which Captain Wharton belonged formed part of the permanent garrison of the city; and the knowledge of the presence of his son was no little relief to the father, in his unceasing meditations on his absent daughters. But Captain Wharton was a young man and a soldier; his estimate of character was not always the wisest; and his propensities led him to imagine that a red coat never concealed a dishonorable heart.

The house of Mr. Wharton became a

fashionable lounge to the officers of the royal army, as did that of every other family that was thought worthy of their notice. The consequences of this association were, to some few of the visited, fortunate; to more injurious, by exciting expectations which were never to be realized, and, unhappily, to no small number ruinous. The known wealth of the father, and, possibly, the presence of a high-spirited brother, forbade any apprehension of the latter danger to the young ladies; but it was impossible that all the admiration bestowed on the fine figure and lovely face of Sarah Wharton should be thrown away. Her person was formed with the early maturity of the climate, and a strict cultivation of the graces had made her, decidedly, the belle of the city.

No one promised to dispute with her this female sovereignty, unless it might be her younger sister. Frances, however, wanted some months to the charmed age of sixteen; and the idea of competition was far from the minds of either of the affectionate girls. Indeed, next to the conversation of Colonel Wellmere, the greatest pleasure of Sarah was in contemplating the budding beauties of the little Hebe, who played around her with all the innocence of youth, with all the enthusiasm of her ardent temper, and with no little of the archness of her native humor. Whether or not it was owing to the fact that Frances received none of the compliments which fell to the lot of her elder sister; in the often-repeated discussions on the merits of the war, between the military beaux who frequented the house, it is certain their effects on the sisters were exactly opposite. It was much the fashion then for the British officers to speak slightly of their enemies; and Sarah took all the idle vamping of her dangles to be truths. The first political opinions which reached the ears of Frances were coupled with sneers on the conduct of her countrymen. At first she believed them; but there was occasionally a general who was obliged to do justice to his enemy in order to obtain justice for himself; and Frances became somewhat skeptical on the subject of the inefficiency of her coun-

trymen. Colonel Wellmere was among those who delighted most in expending his wit on the unfortunate Americans; and, in time, Frances began to listen to his eloquence with great suspicion, and sometimes with resentment.

It was on a hot sultry day that the three were in the parlor of Mr. Wharton's house, the colonel and Sarah seated on a sofa, engaged in a combat of the eyes, aided by the usual flow of small talk, and Frances was occupied at her tamboring frame, in an opposite corner of the room, when the gentleman suddenly exclaimed:

"How gay the arrival of the army under General Burgoyne will make the city, Miss Wharton!"

"Oh! how pleasant it must be," said the thoughtless Sarah, in reply; "I am told there are many charming women with that army, as you say, it will make us all life and gayety."

Frances shook back the abundance of her golden hair, and raised her eyes, dancing with the ardor of national feeling; then laughing, with a concealed humor, she asked:

"Is it so certain that General Burgoyne will be permitted to reach the city?"

"Permitted!" echoed the colonel; "who is there to prevent it, my pretty Miss Fanny?"

Frances was precisely at that age when young people are most jealous of their station in society; neither quite a woman nor yet a child. The "pretty Miss Fanny" was too familiar to be relished, and she dropped her eyes on her work again, with cheeks that glowed like crimson.

"General Stark took the Germans into custody," she answered, compressing her lip; "may not General Gates think the British too dangerous to go at large?"

"Oh! they were Germans, as you say," cried the colonel, excessively vexed at the necessity of explaining at all; "mere mercenary troops; but when the really British regiments come in question, you will see a very different result."

"Of that there is no doubt," cried Sarah, without in the least partaking of the resentment of the colonel to her sis-

ter, but hailing already in her heart the triumph of the British.

"Pray, Colonel Wellmere," said Frances, recovering her good humor, and raising her joyous eyes once more to the face of the gentleman, "was the Lord Percy of Lexington a kinsman of him who fought at Chevy Chase?"

"Why, Miss Fanny, you are becoming a rebel," said the colonel, endeavoring to laugh away the anger he felt; "what you are pleased to insinuate was a chase at Lexington, was nothing more than a judicious retreat—a kind of—"

"Running fight," interrupted the good-humored girl, laying great emphasis on the first word.

"Positively, young lady——" Colonel Wellmere was interrupted by a laugh from a person who had hitherto been unnoticed.

There was a small family apartment adjoining the room occupied by the trio, and the air had blown open the door communicating between the two. A fine young man was now seen sitting near the entrance, who, by his smiling countenance, was evidently a pleased listener to the conversation. He rose instantly, and coming through the door, with his hat in his hand, appeared, a tall, graceful youth, of dark complexion and sparkling eyes of black, from which the mirth had not yet entirely vanished as he made his bow to the ladies.

"Mr. Dunwoodie!" cried Sarah in surprise. "I was ignorant of your being in the house; you will find a cooler seat in this room."

"I thank you," replied the young man, "but I must go and seek your brother, who placed me there in ambuscade, as he called it, with a promise of returning an hour ago." Without making any further explanation, the youth bowed politely to the young women, distantly and with hauteur to the gentleman, and withdrew. Frances followed him into the hall, and blushing richly, inquired, in a hurried voice:

"But why—why do you leave us, Mr. Dunwoodie?—Henry must soon return."

The gentleman caught one of her hands

in his own, and the stern expression of his countenance gave place to a look of admiration, as he replied :

"You managed him famously, my dear little kinswoman; never—no, never forget the land of your birth; remember, if you are the granddaughter of an Englishman, you are also the granddaughter of a Peyton."

"Oh!" returned the laughing girl, "it would be difficult to forget that, with the constant lectures on genealogy before us, with which we are favored by aunt Jeanette—but why do you go?"

"I am on the wing for Virginia, and have much to do." He pressed her hand as he spoke, and looking back while in the act of closing the door, exclaimed, "Be true to your country—be American." The ardent girl kissed her hand to him as he retired, and then instantly applying it with its beautiful fellow to her burning cheeks, ran into her own apartment to hide her confusion.

Between the open sarcasm of Frances, and the ill-concealed disdain of the young man, Colonel Wellmere had felt himself placed in an awkward predicament; but ashamed to resent such trifles in the presence of his mistress, he satisfied himself with observing, superciliously, as Dunwoodie left the room :

"Quite a liberty for a youth in his situation; a shop-boy with a bundle, I fancy."

The idea of picturing the graceful Peyton Dunwoodie as a shop-boy could never enter the mind of Sarah, and she looked around her in surprise, when the colonel continued :

"This Mr. Dun—Dun—"

"Dunwoodie! Oh, no—he is a relation of my aunt," cried the young lady, "and an intimate friend of my brother; they were at school together, and only separated in England, when one went into the army, and the other to a French military academy."

"His money appears to have been thrown away," observed the colonel, betraying the spleen he was unsuccessfully striving to conceal.

"We ought to hope so," added Sarah,

with a smile; "for it is said he intends joining the rebel army. He was brought in here, in a French ship, and has just been exchanged; you may soon meet him in arms."

"Well, let him—I wish Washington plenty of such heroes;" and he turned to a more pleasant subject by changing the discourse to themselves.

A few weeks after this scene occurred the army of Burgoyne laid down their arms. Mr. Wharton, beginning to think the result of the contest doubtful, resolved to conciliate his countrymen, and gratify himself, by calling his daughters into his own abode. Miss Peyton consented to be their companion; and from that time, until the period at which we commence our narrative, they had formed one family.

Whenever the main army made any movements, Captain Wharton had, of course, accompanied it; and once or twice, under the protection of strong parties acting in the neighborhood of the Locusts, he had enjoyed rapid and stolen interviews with his friends. A twelvemonth had, however, passed, without his seeing them; and the impatient Henry had adopted the disguise we have mentioned, and unfortunately arrived on the very evening that an unknown and rather suspicious guest was an inmate of the house, which seldom contained any other than its regular inhabitants.

"But, do you think he suspects me?" asked the captain, with anxiety, after pausing to listen to Cæsar's opinion of the Skinners.

"How should he?" cried Sarah, "when your sisters and father could not penetrate your disguise."

"There is something mysterious in his manner; his looks are too prying for an indifferent observer," continued young Wharton, thoughtfully, "and his face seems familiar to me. The recent fate of André has created much irritation on both sides. Sir Henry threatens retaliation for his death; and Washington is as firm as if half the world were at his command. The rebels would think me a fit subject for their plans just now, should

I be so unlucky as to fall into their hands."

"But, my son," cried his father, in great alarm, "you are not a spy; you are not within the rebel—that is, the American lines—there is nothing here to spy."

"That might be disputed," rejoined the young man, musing; "their pickets were as low as the White Plains when I passed through in disguise. It is true my purposes are innocent; but how is it to appear? My visit to you would seem a cloak to other designs. Remember, sir, the treatment you received not a year since, for sending me a supply of fruit for the winter."

"That proceeded from the misrepresentations of my kind neighbors," said Mr. Wharton, "who hoped, by getting my estate confiscated, to purchase good farms at low prices. Peyton Dunwoodie, however, soon obtained our discharge; we were detained but a month."

"We!" repeated the son, in amazement; "did they take my sisters, also?—Fanny, you wrote me nothing of this."

"I believe," said Frances, coloring highly, "I mentioned the kind treatment we received from your old friend, Major Dunwoodie; and that he procured my father's release."

"True; but were you with him in the rebel camp?"

"Yes," said the father, kindly; "Fanny would not suffer me to go alone. Jeanette and Sarah took charge of the Locusts, and this little girl was my companion in captivity."

"And Fanny returned from such a scene a greater rebel than ever," cried Sarah, indignantly; "one would think the hardships her father suffered would have cured her of such whims."

"What say you to the charge, my pretty sister?" cried the captain, gayly; "did Peyton strive to make you hate your king more than he does himself?"

"Peyton Dunwoodie hates no one," said Frances, quickly; then, blushing at her own ardor, she added immediately, "he loves you, Henry, I know; for he has told me so again and again."

Young Wharton tapped his sister on the cheek, with a smile, as he asked her, in an affected whisper: "Did he tell you also that he loved my little sister Fanny?"

"Nonsense," said Frances; and the remnants of the supper-table soon disappeared under her superintendence.

CHAPTER III.

'Twas when the fields were swept of Autumn's store,
And growling winds the fading foliage tore,
Behind the Lowman hill, the short-lived light,
Descending slowly, usher'd in the night;
When from the noisy town, with mournful look,
His lonely way the meager peddler took.—WILSON.

A STORM below the highlands of the Hudson, if it be introduced with an easterly wind, seldom lasts less than two days. Accordingly, as the inmates of the Locusts assembled, on the following morning, around their early breakfast, the driving rain was seen to strike in nearly horizontal lines against the windows of the building, and forbade the idea of exposing either man or beast to the tempest. Harper was the last to appear; after taking a view of the state of the weather, he apologized to Mr. Wharton for the necessity that existed for his trespassing on his goodness for a long time. To appearances, the reply was as courteous as the excuse; yet Harper wore a resignation in his deportment that was widely different from the uneasy manner of the father. Henry Wharton had resumed his disguise with a reluctance amounting to disgust, but in obedience to the commands of his parent. No communications passed between him and the stranger, after the first salutations of the morning had been paid by Harper to him, in common with the rest of the family.

Frances had, indeed, thought there was something like a smile passing over the features of the traveler when, on entering the room, he first confronted her brother; but it was confined to the eyes, seeming to want power to affect the muscles of the face, and was soon lost in the settled and benevolent expression which reigned in his countenance, with a

sway but seldom interrupted. The eyes of the affectionate sister were turned in anxiety, for a moment, on her brother, and glancing again on her unknown guest, met his look, as he offered her, with marked attention, one of the little civilities of the table; and the heart of the girl, which had begun to throb with violence, regained a pulsation as tempered as youth, health, and buoyant spirits could allow. While yet seated at the table, Cæsar entered, and, laying a small parcel in silence by the side of his master, modestly retired behind the chair, where, placing one hand on its back, he continued in an attitude half familiar, half respectful, a listener.

"What is this, Cæsar?" inquired Mr. Wharton, turning the bundle over to examine its envelope, and eyeing it rather suspiciously.

"The 'baccy, sir; Harvey Birch, he got home, and he bring you a little good 'baccy from York."

"Harvey Birch!" rejoined the master with great deliberation, stealing a look at his guest. "I do not remember desiring him to purchase any tobacco for me; but as he has brought it, he must be paid for his trouble."

For an instant only, as the negro spoke, did Harper suspend his silent meal; his eye moved slowly from the servant to the master, and again all remained in its impenetrable reserve.

To Sarah Wharton this intelligence gave unexpected pleasure; rising from her seat with impatience, she bade the black show Birch into the apartment; when, suddenly recollecting herself, she turned to the traveler with an apologizing look, and added, "if Mr. Harper will excuse the presence of a peddler."

The indulgent benevolence expressed in the countenance of the stranger, as he bowed a silent acquiescence, spoke more eloquently than the nicest framed period, and the young lady repeated her order, with a confidence in its truth that removed all embarrassment.

In the deep recesses of the windows of the cottage were seats of paneled work; and the rich damask curtains that had

ornamented the parlor in Queen street,* had been transferred to the Locusts, and gave to the room that indescribable air of comfort which so gracefully announces the approach of a domestic winter. Into one of these recesses Captain Wharton now threw himself, drawing the curtain before him in such a manner as to conceal most of his person from observation; while his younger sister, losing her natural frankness of manner in an air of artificial constraint, silently took possession of the other.

Harvey Birch had been a peddler from his youth; at least so he frequently asserted, and his skill in the occupation went far to prove the truth of the declaration. He was a native of one of the eastern colonies; and, from something of superior intelligence which belonged to his father, it was thought they had known better fortunes in the land of their nativity. Harvey possessed, however, the common manners of the country, and was in no way distinguished from men of his class, but by his acuteness and the mystery which enveloped his movements. Ten years before, they had arrived together in the vale, and, purchasing the humble dwelling at which Harper had made his unsuccessful application, continued ever since peaceful inhabitants, but little noticed and but little known. Until age and infirmities had prevented, the father devoted himself to the cultivation of the small spot of ground belonging to his purchase, while the son pursued with avidity his humble barter. Their orderly quietude had soon given them so much consideration in the neighborhood as to induce a maiden of five-and-thirty to forget the punctilio of her sex, and to accept the office of presiding over their domestic comforts. The roses had long before vanished from the cheeks of Katy Haynes,

* The Americans changed the names of many towns and streets at the revolution, as has since been done in France. Thus, in the city of New York, Crown street has become Liberty street; King street, Pine street; and Queen street, then one of the most fashionable quarters of the town, Pearl street. Pearl street is now chiefly occupied by the auction dealers and the wholesale dry goods merchants for warehouses and counting-rooms.

and she had seen in succession both her male and female acquaintances forming the union so desirable to her sex, with but little or no hope left for herself, when, with views of her own, she entered the family of the Birches. Necessity is a hard master, and, for the want of a better companion, the father and son were induced to accept her services; but still Katy was not wanting in some qualities which made her a very tolerable housekeeper.

On the one hand, she was neat, industrious, honest, and a good manager. On the other, she was talkative, selfish, superstitious, and inquisitive. By dint of using the latter quality with consummate industry, she had not lived in the family five years when she triumphantly declared that she had heard, or rather overheard, sufficient to enable her to say what had been the former fate of her associates. Could Katy have possessed enough of divination to pronounce upon their future lot, her task would have been accomplished. From the private conversation of the parent and child, she learned that a fire had reduced them from competence to poverty, and at the same time diminished the number of their family to two. There was a tremulousness in the voice of the father, as he touched lightly on the event, which affected even the heart of Katy; but no barrier is sufficient to repel vulgar curiosity. She persevered, until a very direct intimation from Harvey, by threatening to supply her place with a female a few years younger than herself, gave her awful warning that there were bounds beyond which she was not to pass. From that period the curiosity of the housekeeper had been held in such salutary restraint that, although no opportunity of listening was ever neglected, she had been able to add but little to her stock of knowledge. There was, however, one piece of intelligence, and that of no little interest to herself, which she had succeeded in obtaining; and from the moment of its acquisition she directed her energies to the accomplishment of one object, aided by the double stimulus of love and avarice.

Harvey was in the frequent habit of paying mysterious visits, in the depth of

the night, to the fireplace of the apartment that served for both kitchen and parlor. Here he was observed by Katy; and, availing herself of his absence, and the occupations of the father, by removing one of the hearthstones, she discovered an iron pot, glittering with a metal that seldom fails to soften the hardest heart. Katy succeeded in replacing the stone without discovery, and never dared to trust herself with another visit. From that moment, however, the heart of the virgin lost its obduracy; and nothing interposed between Harvey and his happiness but his own want of observation.

The war did not interfere with the traffic of the peddler, who seized on the golden opportunity which the interruption of the regular trade afforded, and appeared absorbed in the one grand object of amassing money. For a year or two his employment was uninterrupted, and his success proportionate; but, at length, dark and threatening hints began to throw suspicion around his movements, and the civil authorities thought it incumbent on them to examine narrowly into his mode of life. His imprisonments, though frequent, were not long, and his escapes from the guardians of the law easy, compared to what he endured from the persecution of the military. Still Birch survived, and still he continued his trade, though compelled to be very guarded in his movements, especially whenever he approached the northern boundaries of the county; or, in other words, the neighborhood of the American lines. His visits to the Locusts had become less frequent, and his appearance at his own abode so seldom, as to draw forth from the disappointed Katy, in the fullness of her heart, the complaint we have related, in her reply to Harper. Nothing, however, seemed to interfere with the pursuits of this indefatigable trader; who, with the view to dispose of certain articles for which he could only find purchasers in the very wealthiest families of the county, had now braved the fury of the tempest, and ventured to cross the half-mile between his own residence and the house of Mr. Wharton.

In a few minutes after receiving the

commands of his young mistress, Cæsar reappeared, ushering into the apartment the subject of the foregoing digression. In person, the peddler was a man above the middle height, spare, but full of bone and muscle. At first sight his strength seemed unequal to manage the unwieldy burden of his pack; yet he threw it on and off with great dexterity, and with as much apparent ease as if it had been filled with feathers. His eyes were gray, sunken, restless, and, for the flitting moments that they dwelt on the countenances of those with whom he conversed, they seemed to read the very soul. They possessed, however, two distinct expressions, which, in a great measure, characterized the whole man. When engaged in traffic, the intelligence of his face appeared lively, active and flexible, though uncommonly acute; if the conversation turned on the ordinary transactions of life, his air became abstracted and restless; but if, by chance, the revolution and the country were the topic, his whole system seemed altered—all his faculties were concentrated; he would listen for a great length of time without speaking, and then would break silence by some light and jocular remark, that was too much at variance with his former manner not to be affectation. But of the war and of his father he seldom spoke, and always from some very obvious necessity.

To a superficial observer avarice would seem his ruling passion—and, all things considered, he was as unfit a subject for the plans of Katy Haynes as can be readily imagined. On entering the room the peddler relieved himself from his burden, which, as it stood on the floor, reached nearly to his shoulders, and saluted the family with modest civility. To Harper he made a silent bow without lifting his eyes from the carpet; but the curtain prevented any notice of the presence of Captain Wharton. Sarah gave but little time for the usual salutations before she commenced her survey of the contents of the pack; and for several minutes the two were engaged in bringing to light the various articles it contained. The tables, chairs and floor were

soon covered with silks, crapes, gloves, muslins, and all the stock of an itinerant trader. Cæsar was employed to hold open the mouth of the pack, as its hoards were discharged, and occasionally he aided his young lady by directing her admiration to some article of finery, which, from its deeper contrast in colors, he thought more worthy of her notice. At length Sarah, having selected several articles, and satisfactorily arranged the prices, observed in a cheerful voice—

“But, Harvey, you have told us no news. Has Lord Cornwallis beaten the rebels again?”

The question could not have been heard, for the peddler, burying his body in the pack, brought forth a quantity of lace of exquisite fineness, and, holding it up to view, he required the admiration of the young lady. Miss Peyton dropped the cup she was engaged in washing, from her hand; and Frances exhibited the whole of that lovely face which had hitherto only suffered one of its joyous eyes to be seen, beaming with a color that shamed the damask which enviously concealed her figure.

The aunt quitted her employment; and Birch soon disposed of a large portion of this valuable article. The praises of the ladies had drawn the whole person of the younger sister into view; and Frances was slowly rising from the window as Sarah repeated her question with an exultation in her voice that proceeded more from pleasure in her purchase than her political feelings. The younger sister resumed her seat, apparently examining the state of the clouds, while the peddler, finding a reply was expected, answered slowly:

“There is some talk, below, about Tarleton having defeated General Sumpter on the Tiger River.”

Captain Wharton now involuntarily thrust his head between the opening of the curtains into the room; and Frances turning her ear in breathless silence, noticed the quiet eyes of Harper looking at the peddler, over the book he was affecting to read, with an expression that denoted him to be a listener of no ordinary interest.

"Indeed!" cried the exulting Sarah; "Sumpter—Sumpter—who is he? I'll not buy even a pin, until you tell me all the news," she continued, laughing, and throwing down a muslin she had been examining.

For a moment the peddler hesitated; his eye glanced toward Harper, who was yet gazing at him with settled meaning, and the whole manner of Birch was altered. Approaching the fire, he took from his mouth a large allowance of the Virginian weed, and depositing it, with the superabundance of its juices, without mercy to Miss Peyton's shining andirons, he returned to his goods.

"He lives somewhere among the niggers to the south," answered the peddler, abruptly.

"No more nigger that be yourself, Mister Birch," interrupted Cæsar, tartly, dropping at the same time the covering of the goods, in high displeasure.

"Hush, Cæsar—hush—never mind it now," said Sarah Wharton, soothingly, impatient to hear further.

"A black man so good as white, Miss Sally," continued the offended negro, "so long as he behave heself."

"And frequently he is much better," rejoined his mistress; "but, Harvey, who is this Mr. Sumpter?"

A slight indication of humor showed itself on the face of the peddler—but it disappeared, and he continued as if the discourse had met with no interruption from the sensitiveness of the domestic.

"As I was saying, he lives among the colored people in the south"—Cæsar resumed his occupation—"and he has lately had a skrimmage with this Colonel Tarleton—"

"Who defeated him, of course," cried Sarah, with confidence.

"So say the troops at Morrisania."

"But what do *you* say?" Mr. Wharton ventured to inquire, yet speaking in a low tone.

"I repeat but what I hear," said Birch, offering a piece of cloth to the inspection of Sarah, who rejected it in silence, evidently determined to hear more before she made another purchase.

"They say, however, at the Plains," the peddler continued, first throwing his eyes again round the room, and letting them rest for an instant on Harper, "that Sumpter and one or two more were all that were hurt, and that the rig'lars were all cut to pieces, for the militia were fixed snugly in a log barn."

"Not very probable," said Sarah, contemptuously, "though I make no doubt the rebels got behind the logs."

"I think," said the peddler, coolly, again offering the silk, "it's quite ingenious to get a log between one and a gun, instead of getting between a gun and a log."

The eyes of Harper dropped quietly on the pages of the volume in his hand, while Frances, rising, came forward with a smile in her face, as she inquired, in a tone of affability that the peddler had never before witnessed from the younger sister:

"Have you more of the lace, Mr. Birch?"

The desired article was immediately produced, and Frances became a purchaser, also. By her order a glass of liquor was offered to the trader, who took it with thanks, and, having paid his compliments to the master of the house and the ladies, drank the beverage.

"So, it is thought that Colonel Tarleton has worsted General Sumpter?" said Mr. Wharton, affecting to be employed in mending the cup that was broken by the eagerness of his sister-in-law.

"I believe they think so at Morrisania," answered Birch, dryly.

"Have you any other news, friend?" asked Captain Wharton, venturing to thrust his face without the curtain again.

"Have you heard that Major André has been hanged?"

Captain Wharton started, and for a moment glances of great significance were exchanged between him and the trader, when he observed, with affected indifference, "that must have been some weeks ago."

"Does his execution make much noise?" asked the father, striving to make the broken china unite.

"People will talk, you know, 'squire."

"Is there any probability of movements below, my friend, that will make traveling dangerous?" asked Harper, looking steadily at the other, in expectation of his reply.

Some bunches of ribbons fell from the hands of Birch; his countenance changed instantly, losing its keen expression in intent meaning, as he answered slowly: "It is some time since the rig'lar cavalry were out, and I saw some of De Lancey's men cleaning their arms as I passed their quarters; it would be no wonder if they took the scent soon, for the Virginia Horse are low in the county."

"Are they in much force?" asked Mr. Wharton, suspending all employment in anxiety.

"I did not count them."

Frances was the only observer of the change in the manner of Birch, and on turning to Harper he had resumed his book in silence. She took some of the ribbons in her hand—laid them down again—and, bending over the goods, so that her hair, falling in rich curls, shaded her face, she observed, blushing with a color that suffused her neck:

"I thought the southern horse had marched toward the Delaware."

"It may be so," said Birch; "I passed the troops at a distance."

Cæsar had now selected a piece of calico, in which the gaudy colors of yellow and red were contrasted on a white ground, and, after admiring it for several minutes, he laid it down with a sigh, as he exclaimed, "Berry pretty calico."

"That," said Sarah; "yes, that would make a proper gown for your wife, Cæsar."

"Yes, Miss Sally," cried the delighted black, "it make old Dinah heart leap for joy—so berry genteel."

"Yes," added the peddler, quaintly, "that is only wanting to make Dinah look like a rainbow."

Cæsar eyed his young mistress eagerly, until she inquired of Harvey the price of the article.

"Why, much as I light of chaps," said the peddler.

"How much?" demanded Sarah, in surprise.

"According to my luck in finding purchasers; for my friend Dinah you may have it at four shillings."

"It is too much," said Sarah, turning to some goods for herself.

"Monstrous price for coarse calico, Mister Birch," grumbled Cæsar, dropping the opening of the pack again.

"We will say three, then," added the peddler, "if you like that better."

"Be sure he like 'em better," said Cæsar, smiling good-humoredly and re-opening the pack—"Miss Sallie like a t'ree shilling when she gave and a four shilling when she take."

The bargain was immediately concluded; but in measuring, the cloth wanted a little of the well-known ten yards required by the dimensions of Dinah. By dint of a strong arm, however, it grew to the desired length, under the experienced eye of the peddler, who conscientiously added a ribbon of corresponding brilliancy with the calico; and Cæsar hastily withdrew to communicate the joyful intelligence to his aged partner.

During the movements created by the conclusion of the purchase, Captain Wharton had ventured to draw aside the curtain, so as to admit a view of his person, and he now inquired of the peddler, who had begun to collect the scattered goods, at what time he had left the city.

"At early twilight," was the answer.

"So lately!" cried the other, in surprise; and then correcting his manner, by assuming a more guarded air, he continued: "Could you pass the pickets at so late an hour?"

"I did," was the laconic reply.

"You must be well known by this time, Harvey, to the officers of the British army," cried Sarah, smiling knowingly on the peddler.

"I know some of them by sight," said Birch, glancing his eyes round the apartment, taking in their course Captain Wharton, and resting for an instant on the countenance of Harper.

Mr. Wharton had listened intently to each speaker in succession, and had so far lost the affectation of indifference, as to be crushing in his hand the pieces of china

on which he had expended so much labor in endeavoring to mend it; when, observing the peddler tying the last knot in his pack, he asked, abruptly:

"Are we about to be disturbed again with the enemy?"

"Who do you call the enemy?" said the peddler, raising himself erect, and giving the other a look before which the eyes of Mr. Wharton sank in instant confusion.

"All are enemies who disturb our peace," said Miss Peyton, observing that her brother was unable to speak. "But are the royal troops out from below?"

"'Tis quite likely they soon may be," returned Birch, raising his pack from the floor, and preparing to leave the room.

"And the continentals," continued Miss Peyton, mildly; "are the continentals in the county?"

Harvey was about to utter something in reply, when the door opened, and Cæsar made his appearance, attended by his delighted spouse.

The race of blacks of which Cæsar was a favorable specimen is becoming very rare. The old family servant, who, born and reared in the dwelling of his master, identified himself with the welfare of those whom it was his lot to serve, is giving place in every direction to that vagrant class which has sprung up within the last thirty years, and whose members roam through the country unfettered by principles and uninfluenced by attachments. For it is one of the curses of slavery, that its victims become incompetent to the attributes of a freeman. The short curly hair of Cæsar had acquired from age a coloring of gray that added greatly to the venerable cast of his appearance. Long and indefatigable applications of the comb had straightened the close curls of his forehead, until they stood erect in a stiff and formal brush that gave at least two inches to his stature. The shining black of his youth had lost its glistening hue, and it had been succeeded by a dingy brown. His eyes, which stood at a most formidable distance from each other, were small, and characterized by an expression of good feeling, occasionally interrupted

by the petulance of an indulged servant; they, however, now danced with inward delight. His nose possessed, in an eminent manner, all the requisites for smelling, but with the most modest unobtrusiveness; the nostrils being abundantly capacious, without thrusting themselves in the way of their neighbors. His mouth was capacious to a fault, and was only tolerated on account of the double row of pearls it contained.

In person, Cæsar was short, and we should say square, had not all the angles and curves of his figure bid defiance to anything like mathematical symmetry. His arms were long and muscular, and terminated by two bony hands, that exhibited on one side a coloring of blackish gray, and on the other a faded pink. But it was in his legs that Nature had indulged her most capricious humor. There was an abundance of material injudiciously used. The calves were neither before nor behind, but rather on the outer side of the limb, inclining forward, and so close to the knees as to render the free use of that joint a subject of doubt. In the foot, considering it as a base on which the body was to rest, Cæsar had no cause of complaint, unless, indeed, it might be that the leg was placed so near the center as to make it sometimes a matter of dispute whether he was not walking backward. But whatever might be the faults a statuary could discover in his person, the heart of Cæsar Thompson was in the right place, and, we doubt not, of very just dimensions.

Accompanied by his ancient companion, Cæsar now advanced, and paid his tribute of gratitude in words. Sarah received them with great complacency, and made a few compliments to the taste of the husband and the probable appearance of the wife. Frances, with a face beaming with a look of pleasure that corresponded to the smiling countenance of the blacks, offered the service of her needle in fitting the admired calico to its future uses. The offer was humbly and gratefully accepted.

As Cæsar followed his wife and the peddler from the apartment, and was in the act of closing the door, he indulged

himself in a grateful soliloquy, by saying aloud :

" Good little lady—Miss Fanny—take care of he fader—love to make a gown for old Dinah, too." What else his feelings might have induced him to utter is unknown, but the sound of his voice was heard some time after the distance rendered his words indistinct.

Harper had dropped his book, and he sat an admiring witness of the scene ; and Frances enjoyed a double satisfaction, as she received an approving smile from a face which concealed, under the traces of deep thought and engrossing care, the benevolent expression which characterizes all the best feelings of the human heart.

CHAPTER IV.

" It is the form, the eye, the word,
The bearing of that stranger Lord,
His stature, manly, bold, and tall,
Built like a castle's battled wall,
Yet molded in such just degrees,
His giant strength seems lightsome ease.
Weather and wear their rougher trace
Have left on that majestic face ;—
But 'tis his dignity of eye !
There, if a suppliant, I would fly,
Secure, 'mid danger, wrongs, and grief,
Of sympathy, redress, relief—
That glance, if guilty, would I dread
More than the doom that spoke me dead !"
" Enough, enough !" the princess cried,
" 'Tis Scotland's hope, her joy, her pride !"
—WALTER SCOTT.

THE party sat in silence for many minutes after the peddler had withdrawn. Mr. Wharton had heard enough to increase his uneasiness, without in the least removing his apprehensions on behalf of his son. The captain was impatiently wishing Harper in any other place than the one he occupied with such apparent composure, while Miss Peyton completed the disposal of her breakfast equipage with the mild complacency of her nature, aided a little by an inward satisfaction at possessing so large a portion of the trader's lace, Sarah was busily occupied in arranging her purchases, and Frances was kindly assisting in the occupation, disregarding

her own neglected bargains, when the stranger suddenly broke the silence by saying :

" If any apprehensions of me induce Captain Wharton to maintain his disguise, I wish him to be undeceived ; had I motives for betraying him, they could not operate under present circumstances."

The younger sister sank into her seat, colorless and astonished. Miss Peyton dropped the tea-tray she was lifting from the table, and Sarah sat with her purchases unheeded in her lap, in speechless surprise. Mr. Wharton was stupefied ; but the captain, hesitating a moment from astonishment, sprang into the middle of the room, and exclaimed, as he tore off the instruments of his disguise :

" I believe you from my soul, and this tiresome imposition shall continue no longer. Yet I am at a loss to conceive in what manner you should know me."

" You really look so much better in your proper person, Captain Wharton," said Harper, with a slight smile, " I would advise you never to conceal it in future. There is enough to betray you, if other sources of detection were wanting." As he spoke, he pointed to a picture suspended over the mantelpiece, which exhibited the British officer in his regimentals.

" I had flattered myself," cried young Wharton, with a laugh, " that I looked better on the canvas than in a masquerade. You must be a close observer, sir."

" Necessity has made me one," said Harper, rising from his seat.

Frances met him as he was about to withdraw, and, taking his hand between both her own, said with earnestness, her cheeks mantling with their richest vermilion : " You cannot—you will not—betray my brother."

For an instant Harper paused in silent admiration of the lovely pleader, and then, folding her hands on his breast, he replied solemnly : " I cannot, and I will not ;" he released her hands, and laying his own on her head gently, continued : " If the blessing of a stranger can profit you, receive it." He turned, and, bowing low, retired, with a delicacy that was duly appreciated

by those he quitted, to his own apartment.

The whole party were deeply impressed with the ingenuous and solemn manner of the traveler, and all but the father found immediate relief in his declaration. Some of the cast-off clothes of the captain, which had been removed with the goods from the city, were produced; and young Wharton, released from the uneasiness of his disguise, began at last to enjoy a visit which had been undertaken at so much personal risk to himself. Mr. Wharton retiring to his apartment, in pursuance of his regular engagements, the ladies, with the young man, were left to an uninterrupted communication on such subjects as were most agreeable. Even Miss Peyton was affected with the spirits of her young relatives; and they sat for an hour enjoying, in heedless confidence, the pleasure of an unrestrained conversation, without reflecting on any danger which might be impending over them. The city and their acquaintances were not long neglected; for Miss Peyton, who had never forgotten the many agreeable hours of her residence within its boundaries, soon inquired, among others, after their old acquaintance, Colonel Wellmere.

"Oh!" cried the captain, gayly, "he yet continues there, as handsome and gallant as ever."

Although a woman be not actually in love, she seldom hears without a blush the name of a man whom she *might* love, and who has been connected with herself, by idle gossips, in the amatory rumor of the day. Such had been the case with Sarah, and she dropped her eyes on the carpet with a smile that, aided by the blush which suffused her cheek, in no degree detracted from her native charms.

Captain Wharton, without heeding this display of interest in his sister, immediately continued: "At times he is melancholy—we tell him it must be love." Sarah raised her eyes to the face of her brother, and was consciously turning them on the rest of the party, when she met those of her sister, laughing with good-humor and high spirits, as she cried, "Poor man, does he despair?"

"Why, no—one would think he could not; the eldest son of a man of wealth, so handsome, and a colonel."

"Strong reasons, indeed, why he should prevail," said Sarah, endeavoring to laugh; "more particularly the latter."

"Let me tell you," replied the captain, gravely, "a lieutenant-colonelcy in the Guards is a very pretty thing."

"And Colonel Wellmere a very pretty man," added Frances.

"Nay, Frances," returned her sister, "Colonel Wellmere was never a favorite of yours; he is too loyal to his king to be agreeable to your taste!"

Frances quickly answered, "And is not Henry loyal to his king?"

"Come, come," said Miss Peyton, "no difference of opinion about the colonel—he is a favorite of mine."

"Fanny likes majors better," cried the brother, pulling her upon his knee.

"Nonsense," said the blushing girl, as she endeavored to extricate herself from the grasp of her laughing brother.

"It surprises me," continued the captain, "that Peyton, when he procured the release of my father, did not endeavor to detain my sister in the rebel camp."

"That might have endangered his own liberty," said the smiling girl, resuming her seat; "you know it is liberty for which Major Dunwoodie is fighting."

"Liberty!" exclaimed Sarah; "very pretty liberty which exchanges one master for fifty."

"The privilege of changing masters at all is a liberty."

"And one you ladies would sometimes be glad to exercise," cried the captain.

"We like, I believe, to have the liberty of choosing who they shall be, in the first place," said the laughing girl; "don't we, Aunt Jeanette?"

"Me!" cried Miss Peyton, starting; "what do I know of such things, child? You must ask some one else, if you wish to learn such matters."

"Ah! you would have us think you were never young; but what am I to believe of all the tales I have heard about the handsome Miss Jeanette Peyton?"

"Nonsense, my dear, nonsense," said

the aunt, endeavoring to suppress a smile; "it is very silly to believe all you hear."

"Nonsense, do you call it?" cried the captain, gayly; "to this hour General Montrose toasts Miss Peyton; I heard him within the week at Sir Henry's table."

"Why, Henry, you are as saucy as your sister; and to break in upon your folly, I must take you to see my new home-made manufactures, which I will be bold enough to put in contrast with the finery of Birch."

The young people rose to follow their aunt, in perfect good humor with each other and the world. On ascending the stairs to the place of deposit for Miss Peyton's articles of domestic economy, she availed herself, however, of an opportunity to inquire of her nephew whether General Montrose suffered as much from the gout as he had done when she knew him.

It is a painful discovery we make, as we advance in life, that even those we most love are not exempt from its frailties. When the heart is fresh, and the view of the future unsullied by blemishes which have been gathered from the experience of the past, our feelings are most holy; we love to identify with the persons of our natural friends all those qualities to which we ourselves aspire, and all those virtues we have been taught to revere. The confidence with which we esteem seems a part of our nature; and there is a purity thrown around the affections which tie us to our kindred that after-life can seldom hope to see uninjured. The family of Mr. Wharton continued to enjoy, for the remainder of the day, a happiness to which they had long been strangers; and one that sprung, in its younger members, from the delights of the most confident affection and the exchange of the most disinterested endearments.

Harper appeared only at the dinner-table, and he retired with the cloth, under the pretense of some engagements in his own room. Notwithstanding the confidence created by his manner, the family felt his absence a relief; for the visit of

Captain Wharton was necessarily to be confined to a very few days, both from the limitation of his leave of absence and the danger of a discovery.

All dread of consequences, however, was lost in the pleasure of the meeting. Once or twice during the day, Mr. Wharton had suggested a doubt as to the character of his unknown guest and the possibility of the detection of his son proceeding in some manner from his information; but the idea was earnestly opposed by all his children; even Sarah uniting with her brother and sister in pleading warmly in favor of the sincerity expressed in the outward appearance of the traveler.

"Such appearances, my children," replied the desponding parent, "are but too often deceitful; when men like Major André lend themselves to the purposes of fraud, it is idle to reason from qualities, much less externals."

"Fraud!" cried his son, quickly; "surely, sir, you forget that Major André was serving his king, and that the usages of war justified the measure."

"And did not the usages of war justify his death, Henry?" inquired Frances, speaking in a low voice, unwilling to abandon what she thought the cause of her country, and yet unable to suppress her feelings for the man.

"Never!" exclaimed the young man, springing from his seat and pacing the floor rapidly—"Frances, you shock me; suppose it should be my fate, even now, to fall into the power of the rebels; you would vindicate my execution—perhaps exult in the cruelty of Washington."

"Henry!" said Frances, solemnly, quivering with emotion, and with a face pale as death, "you little know my heart."

"Pardon me, my sister—my little Fanny," cried the repentant youth, pressing her to his bosom, and kissing off the tears which had burst, in spite of her resolution, from her eyes.

"It is very foolish to regard your hasty words, I know," said Frances, extricating herself from his arms, and raising her yet humid eyes to his face with a smile; "but reproach from those we love is most

severe, Henry; particularly—where we—we think—we know”—her paleness gradually gave place to the color of the rose, as she concluded in a low voice, with her eyes directed to the carpet, “we are undeserving of it.”

Miss Peyton moved from her own seat to the one next her niece, and, kindly taking her hand, observed: “You should not suffer the impetuosity of your brother to affect you so much; boys, you know, are proverbially ungovernable.”

“And, from my conduct, you might add cruel,” said the captain, seating himself on the other side of his sister; “but on the subject of the death of André we are all of us uncommonly sensitive. You did not know him; he was all that was brave—that was accomplished—that was estimable.” Frances smiled faintly and shook her head, but made no reply. Her brother observing the marks of incredulity in her countenance, continued: “You doubt it, and justify his death?”

“I do not doubt his worth,” replied the maid, mildly, “nor his being deserving of a more happy fate; but I cannot doubt the propriety of Washington’s conduct. I know but little of the customs of war, and wish to know less; but with what hopes of success could the Americans contend, if they yielded all the principles which long usage had established, to the exclusive purposes of the British?”

“Why contend at all?” cried Sarah, impatiently; “besides, being rebels, all their acts are illegal.”

“Women are but mirrors, which reflect the images before them,” cried the captain, good-naturedly. “In Frances I see the picture of Major Dunwoodie, and in Sarah —”

“Colonel Wellmere,” interrupted the younger sister, laughing, and blushing crimson. “I must confess I am indebted to the major for my reasoning—am I not, Aunt Jeannette?”

“I believe it is something like his logic, indeed, child.”

“I plead guilty; and you, Sarah, have not forgotten the learned discussions of Colonel Wellmere.”

“I trust I never forget the right,” said

Sarah, emulating her sister in color, and rising, under the pretense of avoiding the heat of the fire.

Nothing occurred of any moment during the rest of the day; but in the evening Cæsar reported that he had overheard voices in the room of Harper conversing in a low tone. The apartment occupied by the traveler was the wing at the extremity of the building, opposite to the parlor in which the family ordinarily assembled; and it seems that Cæsar had established a regular system of espionage, with a view to the safety of his young master. This intelligence gave some uneasiness to all the members of the family; but the entrance of Harper himself, with the air of benevolence and sincerity which shone through his reserve, soon removed the doubts from the breasts of all but Mr. Wharton. His children and sister believed Cæsar to have been mistaken, and the evening passed off without any additional alarm.

On the afternoon of the succeeding day, the party were assembled in the parlor around the tea-table of Miss Peyton, when a change in the weather occurred. The thin *scud*, that apparently floated but a short distance above the tops of the hills, began to drive from the west toward the east with astonishing rapidity. The rain yet continued to beat against the eastern windows of the house with fury; in that direction the heavens were dark and gloomy. Frances was gazing at the scene with the desire of youth to escape from the tedium of confinement, when, as if by magic, all was still.

The rushing winds had ceased, the pelt-ing of the storm was over, and, springing to the window with delight pictured in her face, she saw a glorious ray of sunshine lighting the opposite wood. The foliage glittered with the checkered beauties of the October leaf, reflecting back from the moistened boughs the richest luster of an American autumn. In an instant the piazza, which opened to the south, was thronged with the inmates of the cottage. The air was mild, balmy and refreshing; in the east, clouds, which might be likened to the retreating masses of a discomfited

army, hung around the horizon in awful and increasing darkness. At a little elevation above the cottage, the thin vapor was still rushing toward the east with amazing velocity; while in the west the sun had broken forth and shed his parting radiance on the scene below, aided by the fullest richness of a clear atmosphere and a freshened herbage. Such moments belong only to the climate of America, and are enjoyed in a degree proportioned to the suddenness of the contrast, and the pleasure we experience in escaping from the turbulence of the elements to the quiet of a peaceful evening, and an air still as the softest mornings in June.

"What a magnificent scene!" said Harper, in a low tone; "how grand! how awfully sublime!—May such a quiet speedily await the struggle in which my country is engaged, and such a glorious evening follow the day of her adversity!"

Frances, who stood next to him, alone heard the voice. Turning in amazement from the view to the speaker, she saw him standing bareheaded, erect, and with his eyes lifted to heaven. There was no longer the quiet which had seemed their characteristic, but they were lighted into something like enthusiasm, and a slight flush passed over his features.

"There can be no danger apprehended from such a man," thought Frances; "such feelings belong only to the virtuous."

The musings of the party were now interrupted by the sudden appearance of the peddler. He had taken advantage of the first gleam of sunshine to hasten to the cottage. Heedless of wet or dry as it lay in his path, with arms swinging to and fro, and with his head bent forward of his body several inches, Harvey Birch approached the piazza, with a gait peculiarly his own. It was the quick, lengthened pace of an itinerant vender of goods.

"Fine evening," said the peddler, saluting the party, without raising his eyes; "quite warm and agreeable for the season."

Mr. Wharton assented to the remark, and inquired kindly after the health of his father. Harvey heard him, and contin-

ued standing for some time in moody silence, but the question being repeated, he answered, with a slight tremor in his voice:

"He fails fast; old age and hardships will do their work." The peddler turned his face from the view of most of the family; but Frances noticed his glistening eyes and quivering lip, and, for the second time, Harvey rose in her estimation.

The valley in which the residence of Mr. Wharton stood ran in a direction from northwest to southeast, and the house was placed on the side of a hill which terminated its length in the former direction. A small opening, occasioned by the receding of the opposite hill and the fall of the land to the level of the tide-water, afforded a view of the Sound* over the tops of the distant woods on its margin. The surface of the water, which had so lately been lashing the shores with boisterous fury, was already losing its ruffled darkness in the long and regular undulations that succeeded a tempest, while the light air from the southwest was gently touching their summits, lending its feeble aid in stilling the waters. Some dark spots were now to be distinguished, occasionally rising into view, and again sinking behind the lengthened waves which interposed themselves to the sight. They were unnoticed by all but the peddler. He had seated himself on the piazza, at a distance from Harper, and appeared to have forgotten the object of his visit. His roving eye, however, soon caught a glimpse of these new objects in the view, and he sprang up with alacrity, gazing intently toward the water. He changed his place, glanced his eye with marked uneasiness on Harper, and then said, with great emphasis:

"The rig'lars must be out from below."

"Why do you think so?" inquired Captain Wharton, eagerly. "God send it may be true; I want their escort in again."

"Them ten whale-boats would not move

* An island more than forty leagues in length lies opposite the coasts of New York and Connecticut. The arm of the sea which separates it from the main, technically called a sound, and in that part of the country, *par excellence*, *The Sound*. This sheet of water varies in its breadth from five to thirty miles.

so fast unless they were better manned than common."

"Perhaps," cried Mr. Wharton, in alarm, "they are—they are continentals returning from the island."

"They look like rig'lars," said the peddler, with meaning.

"Look!" repeated the captain, "there is nothing but spots to be seen."

Harvey disregarded his observation, but seemed to be soliloquizing, as he said in an undertone: "They came out before the gale—have laid on the island these two days—horse are on the road—there will soon be fighting near us." During this speech, Birch several times glanced his eye toward Harper, with evident uneasiness, but no corresponding emotion betrayed any interest of that gentleman in the scene. He stood in silent contemplation of the view, and seemed enjoying the change in the air. As Birch concluded, however, Harper turned to his host, and mentioned that his business would not admit of unnecessary delay; he would, therefore, avail himself of the fine evening to ride a few miles on his journey. Mr. Wharton made many professions of regret at losing so agreeable an inmate, but was too mindful of his duty not to speed the parting guest, and orders were instantly given to that effect.

The uneasiness of the peddler increased in a manner for which nothing apparent could account; his eye was constantly wandering toward the lower end of the vale, as if in expectation of some interruption from that quarter. At length Cæsar appeared, leading the noble beast which was to bear the weight of the traveler. The peddler officiously assisted to tighten the girths, and fasten the blue cloak and valise to the mail-straps.

Every preparation being completed, Harper proceeded to take his leave. To Sarah and her aunt he paid his compliments with ease and kindness, but when he came to Frances, he paused a moment, while his face assumed an expression of more than ordinary benignity. His eye repeated the blessing which had before fallen from his lips, and the girl felt her cheeks glow, and her heart beat with a

quicker pulsation, as he spoke his adieux. There was a mutual exchange of polite courtesy between the host and his parting guest; but as Harper frankly offered his hand to Captain Wharton, he remarked in a manner of great solemnity:

"The step you have undertaken is one of much danger, and disagreeable consequences to yourself may result from it; in such a case, I may have it in my power to prove the gratitude I owe your family for its kindness."

"Surely, sir," cried the father, losing sight of delicacy in apprehension for his child, "you will keep secret the discovery which your being in my house has enabled you to make."

Harper turned quickly to the speaker, and then, losing the sternness which had begun to gather on his countenance, he answered mildly: "I have learned nothing in your family, sir, of which I was ignorant before; but your son is safer from my knowledge of his visit than he would be without it."

He bowed to the whole party, and without taking any notice of the peddler, other than by simply thanking him for his attentions, mounted his horse, and, riding steadily and gracefully through the little gate, was soon lost behind the hill which sheltered the valley to the northward.

The eyes of the peddler followed the retiring figure of the horseman as long as it continued within view, and as it disappeared from his sight he drew a long and heavy sigh, as if relieved from a load of apprehension. The Whartons had meditated in silence on the character and visit of their unknown guest for the same period, when the father approached Birch and observed:

"I am yet your debtor, Harvey, for the tobacco you were so kind as to bring me from the city."

"If it should not prove as good as the first," replied the peddler, fixing a last and lingering look in the direction of Harper's route, "it is owing to a scarcity of the article."

"I like it much," continued the other; "but you have forgotten to name the price."

The countenance of the trader changed, and losing its expression of deep care in a natural acuteness, he answered :

"It is hard to say what ought to be the price; I believe I must leave it to your own generosity."

Mr. Wharton had taken a hand well filled with the images of Carolus III. from his pocket, and now extended it toward Birch with three of the pieces between his finger and thumb. Harvey's eyes twinkled as he contemplated the reward; and rolling over in his mouth a large quantity of the article in question, he coolly stretched forth his hand, into which the dollars fell with a most agreeable sound; but not satisfied with the transient music of their fall, the peddler gave each piece in succession a ring on the stepping-stone of the piazza, before he consigned it to the safe keeping of a huge deerskin purse, which vanished from the sight of the spectators so dexterously that not one of them could have told about what part of his person it was secreted.

This very material point in his business so satisfactorily completed, the peddler rose from his seat on the floor of the piazza, and approached to where Captain Wharton stood, supporting his sisters on either arm as they listened with the lively interest of affection to his conversation.

The agitation of the preceding incidents had caused such an expenditure of the juices which had become necessary to the mouth of the peddler, that a new supply of the weed was required before he could turn his attention to business of lesser moment. This done he asked, abruptly :

"Captain Wharton, do you go in to-night?"

"No!" said the captain, laconically, and looking at his lovely burdens with great affection. "Mr. Birch, would you have me leave such company so soon, when I may never enjoy it again?"

"Brother!" said Frances, "jesting on such a subject is cruel."

"I rather guess," continued the peddler, coolly, "now the storm is over the Skinners may be moving; you had better shorten your visit, Captain Wharton."

"Oh!" cried the British officer, "a

few guineas will buy off those rascals at any time, should I meet them. No, no, Mr. Birch, here I stay until morning."

"Money could not liberate Major André," said the peddler, dryly.

Both the sisters now turned to the captain in alarm, and the elder observed :

"You had better take the advice of Harvey; rest assured, brother, his opinion in such matters ought not to be disregarded."

"Yes," added the younger, "if, as I suspect, Mr. Birch assisted you to come here, your safety, or happiness, dear Henry, requires you to listen to him now."

"I brought myself out, and can take myself in," said the captain, positively; "our bargain went no farther than to procure my disguise, and to let me know when the coast was clear; and in the latter particular you were mistaken, Mr. Birch."

"I was," said the peddler, with some interest, "and the greater is the reason why you should go back to-night; the pass I gave you will serve but once."

"Cannot you forge another?"

The pale cheek of the trader showed an unusual color, but he continued silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground, until the young man added, with great positiveness: "Here I stay this night, come what will."

"Captain Wharton," said the peddler, with great deliberation and marked emphasis, "beware a tall Virginian, with huge whiskers! he is below you to my knowledge; the devil can't deceive him; I never could but once."

"Let him beware of me," said Wharton, haughtily; "but, Mr. Birch, I exonerate you from further responsibility."

"Will you give me that in writing?" asked the cautious Birch.

"Oh! cheerfully," cried the captain, with a laugh. "Cæsar! pen, ink, and paper, while I write a discharge for my trusty attendant, Harvey Birch; peddler, etc., etc."

The implements for writing were produced, and the captain, with great gayety, wrote the desired acknowledgment in

language of his own; which the peddler took, and carefully depositing it by the side of the images of his Catholic Majesty, made a sweeping bow to the whole family, and departed as he had approached. He was soon seen at a distance, stealing into the door of his own humble dwelling.

The father and sisters of the captain were too much rejoiced in retaining the young man to express, or even entertain, the apprehensions his situation might reasonably excite; but on retiring to their evening repast, a cooler reflection induced the captain to think of changing his mind. Unwilling to trust himself out of the protection of his father's domains, the young man dispatched Cæsar to desire another interview with Harvey. The black soon returned with the unwelcome intelligence that it was now too late. Katy had told him that Harvey must be miles on his road to the northward, "having left home at early candlelight with his pack." Nothing now remained to the captain but patience, until the morning should afford further opportunity of deciding on the best course for him to pursue.

"This Harvey Birch, with his knowing looks and portentous warnings, gives me more uneasiness than I am willing to own," said Captain Wharton, rousing himself from a fit of musing in which the danger of his situation made no small part of his meditations.

"How is it that he is able to travel to and fro, in these difficult times, without molestation?" inquired Miss Peyton.

"Why the rebels suffer him to escape so easily is more than I can answer," returned the other; "but Sir Henry would not permit a hair of his head to be injured."

"Indeed!" cried Frances, with interest; "is he then known to Sir Henry Clinton?"

"At least he ought to be."

"Do you think, my son," asked Mr. Wharton, "there is no danger of his betraying you?"

"Why—no; I reflected on that before I trusted myself to his power," said the captain, thoughtfully; "he seems to be faithful in matters of business. The dan-

ger to himself, should he return to the city, would prevent such an act of villainy."

"I think," said Frances, adopting the manner of her brother, "Harvey Birch is not without good feelings; at least he has the appearance of them at times."

"Oh!" cried his sister, exulting, "he has loyalty, and that with me is a cardinal virtue."

"I am afraid," said her brother, laughing, "love of money is a stronger passion than love of his king."

"Then," said the father, "you cannot be safe while in his power—for no love will withstand the temptation of money when offered to avarice."

"Surely, sir," cried the youth, recovering his gayety, "there must be one love that can resist anything—is there not, Fanny?"

"Here is your candle, you keep your father up beyond his usual hour."

CHAPTER V.

Through Solway sands through Taross moss
Blindfold, he knew the paths to cross;
By wily turns, by desperate bounds,
Had baffled Percy's best bloodhounds.
In Esk, or Liddel, fords were none,
But he would ride them, one by one;
Alike to him was time, or tide,
December snow, or July's pride;
Alike to him was tide or time,
Moonless midnight, or matin prime.

—WALTER SCOTT.

ALL the members of the Wharton family laid their heads on their pillows that night with a foreboding of some interruption to their ordinary quiet. Uneasiness kept the sisters from enjoying their usual repose, and they rose from their beds on the following morning unrefreshed and almost without having closed their eyes.

On taking an eager and hasty survey of the valley from the windows of their room, nothing, however, but its usual serenity was to be seen. It was glittering with the opening brilliancy of one of those lovely, mild days, which occur about the time of the falling of the leaf, and which, by their frequency, class the American

autumn with the most delightful seasons of other countries. We have no spring; vegetation seems to leap into existence, instead of creeping, as in the same latitudes of the old world; but how gracefully it retires! September, October, even November and December, compose the season for enjoyment in the open air; they have their storms, but they are distinct and not of long continuance, leaving a clear atmosphere and a cloudless sky.

As nothing could be seen likely to interrupt the enjoyments and harmony of such a day, the sisters descended to the parlor with a returning confidence in their brother's security, and their own happiness.

The family were early in assembling around the breakfast table; and Miss Peyton, with a little of that minute precision which creeps into the habit of single life, had pleasantly insisted that the absence of her nephew should in no manner interfere with the regular hours she had established; consequently, the party were already seated when the captain made his appearance; though the untasted coffee sufficiently proved that by none of his relatives was his absence disregarded.

"I think I did much better," he cried, taking a chair between his sisters and receiving their offered salutes, "to secure a good bed and such a plentiful breakfast, instead of trusting to the hospitality of that renowned corps, the Cowboys."

"If you could sleep," said Sarah, "you were more fortunate than Frances and myself; every murmur of the night air sounded to me like the approach of the rebel army."

"Why," said the captain, laughing, "I do acknowledge a little inquietude myself—but how was it with you?" turning to his younger and evidently favorite sister, and tapping her cheek; "did you see banners in the clouds, and mistake Miss Peyton's *Æolian* harp for rebellious music?"

"Nay, Henry," rejoined the maid, looking at him affectionately, "much as I love my own country, the approach of her troops just now would give me great pain."

The brother made no reply; but return-

ing the fondness expressed in her eye by a look of fraternal tenderness, he gently pressed her hand in silence; when Cæsar, who had participated largely in the anxiety of the family, and who had risen with the dawn, and kept a vigilant watch on the surrounding objects as he stood gazing from one of the windows, exclaimed, with a face that approached to something like the hues of a white man:

"Run—massa—Harry—run—if he love old Cæsar, run—here come a rebel horse."

"Run!" repeated the British officer, gathering himself up in military pride; "no, Mr. Cæsar, running is not my trade." While speaking, he walked deliberately to the window, where the family were already collected in the greatest consternation.

At the distance of more than a mile about fifty dragoons were to be seen winding down one of the lateral entrances of the valley. In advance with an officer, was a man attired in the dress of a countryman, who pointed in the direction of the cottage. A small party now left the main body, and moved rapidly toward the object of their destination.

On reaching the road which led through the bottom of the valley, they turned their horses' heads to the north. The Whartons continued chained in breathless silence to the spot, watching their movements, when the party, having reached the dwelling of Birch, made a rapid circle around the grounds, and in an instant his house was surrounded by a dozen sentinels.

Two or three of the dragoons now dismounted and disappeared; in a few minutes, however, they returned to the yard, followed by Katy, from whose violent gesticulations it was evident that matters of no trifling concern were on the carpet. A short communication with the loquacious housekeeper followed the arrival of the main body of the troop, and the advanced party remounting, the whole moved toward the Locusts with great speed.

As yet none of the family had sufficient presence of mind to devise any means of security for Captain Wharton; but the

danger now became too pressing to admit of longer delay, and various means of secreting him were hastily proposed; but they were all haughtily rejected by the young man, as unworthy of his character. It was too late to retreat to the woods in the rear of the cottage, for he would unavoidably be seen, and, followed by a troop of horse, as inevitably taken.

At length his sisters, with trembling hands, replaced his original disguise, the instruments of which had been carefully kept at hand by Cæsar, in expectation of some sudden emergency.

This arrangement was hastily and imperfectly completed, as the dragoons entered the lawn and orchard of the Locusts, riding with the rapidity of the wind; and in their turn the Whartons were surrounded.

Nothing remained now but to meet the impending examination with as much indifference as the family could assume. The leader of the horse dismounted, and, followed by a couple of his men, he approached the outer door of the building, which was slowly and reluctantly opened for his admission by Cæsar. The heavy tread of the trooper, as he followed the black to the door of the parlor, rang in the ears of the females as it approached nearer and nearer, and drove the blood from their faces to their hearts, with a chill that nearly annihilated feeling.

A man, whose colossal stature manifested the possession of vast strength, entered the room, and removing his cap, he saluted the family with a mildness his appearance did not indicate as belonging to his nature. His dark hair hung around his brow in profusion, though stained with the powder which was worn at that day, and his face was nearly hid in the whiskers by which it was disfigured. Still, the expression of his eye, though piercing, was not bad, and his voice, though deep and powerful, was far from unpleasant. Frances ventured to throw a timid glance at his figure as he entered, and saw at once the man from whose scrutiny Harvey Birch had warned them there was so much to be apprehended.

"You have no cause for alarm, ladies,"

said the officer, pausing a moment, and contemplating the pale faces around him; "my business will be confined to a few questions, which, if freely answered, will instantly remove us from your dwelling."

"And what may they be, sir?" stammered Mr. Wharton, rising from his chair and waiting anxiously for the reply.

"Has there been a strange gentleman staying with you during the storm?" continued the dragoon, speaking with interest, and in some degree sharing in the evident anxiety of the father.

"This gentleman—here—favored us with his company during the rain, and has not yet departed."

"This gentleman!" repeated the other, turning to Captain Wharton, and contemplating his figure for a moment, until the anxiety of his countenance gave place to a lurking smile. He approached the youth with an air of comic gravity, and with a low bow, continued—"I am sorry for the severe cold you have in your head, sir."

"I!" exclaimed the captain in surprise; "I have no cold in my head."

"I fancied it, then, from seeing you had covered such handsome black locks with that ugly old wig; it was my mistake, you will please to pardon it."

Mr. Wharton groaned aloud; but the ladies, ignorant of the extent of their visitor's knowledge, remained in trembling yet rigid silence. The captain himself moved his hand involuntarily to his head, and discovered that the trepidation of his sisters had left some of his natural hair exposed. The dragoon watched the movement with a continued smile, when, seeming to recollect himself, turning to the father, he proceeded:

"Then, sir, I am to understand there has not been a Mr. Harper here, within the week."

"Mr. Harper," echoed the other, feeling a load removed from his heart—"yes—I had forgotten; but he is gone, and if there be anything wrong in his character, we are in entire ignorance of it—to me he was a total stranger."

"You have but little to apprehend from his character," answered the dragoon,

dryly; "but he is gone—how—when and whither?"

"He departed as he arrived," said Mr. Wharton, gathering renewed confidence from the manner of the trooper; "on horseback, last evening, and he took the northern road."

The officer listened to him with intense interest, his countenance gradually lighting into a smile of pleasure; and the instant Mr. Wharton concluded his laconic reply, he turned on his heel and left the apartment. The Whartons, judging from his manner, thought he was about to proceed in quest of the object of his inquiries. They observed the dragoon, on gaining the lawn, in earnest, and apparently pleased, conversation with his two subalterns. In a few moments orders were given to some of the troop, and horsemen left the valley, at full speed, by various roads.

The suspense of the party within, who were all highly interested witnesses of the scene, was shortly terminated; for the heavy tread of the dragoon soon announced his second approach. He bowed again politely as he re-entered the room, and walking up to Captain Wharton, said, with comic gravity:

"Now, sir, my principal business being done, may I beg to examine the quality of that wig?"

The British officer imitated the manner of the other, as he deliberately uncovered his head and, handing him the wig, observed, "I hope, sir, it is to your liking."

"I cannot, without violating the truth, say it is," returned the dragoon; "I prefer your ebony hair, from which you seem to have combed the powder with great industry. But that must have been a sad hurt you have received under the enormous black patch."

"You appear so close an observer of things, I should like your opinion of it, sir," said Henry, removing the silk, and exhibiting the cheek free from blemish.

"Upon my word, you improve most rapidly in externals," added the trooper, preserving his muscles in inflexible gravity: "if I could but persuade you to exchange this old surtout for that hand-

some blue coat by your side, I think I never could witness a more agreeable metamorphosis, since I was changed myself from a lieutenant to a captain.

Young Wharton very composedly did as was required; and stood an extremely handsome, well-dressed young man. The dragoon looked at him for a moment with the drollery that characterized his manner, and then continued.

"This is a new-comer in the scene; it is usual, you know, for strangers to be introduced; I am Captain Lawton, of the Virginia Horse."

"And I, sir, am Captain Wharton, of His Majesty's 60th Regiment of Foot," returned Henry, bowing stiffly, and recovering his natural manner.

The countenance of Lawton changed instantly, and his assumed quaintness vanished. He viewed the figure of Captain Wharton, as he stood proudly swelling with a pride that disdained further concealment, and exclaimed with great earnestness:

"Captain Wharton, from my soul I pity you."

"Oh, then," cried the father in agony, "if you pity him, dear sir, why molest him? He is not a spy; nothing but a desire to see his friends prompted him to venture so far from the regular army in disguise. Leave him with us. There is no reward, no sum, which I will not cheerfully pay."

"Sir, your anxiety for your friend excuses your language," said Lawton, haughtily; "but you forget I am a Virginian and a gentleman." Turning to the young man, he continued: "Were you ignorant, Captain Wharton, that our pickets have been below for several days?"

"I did not know it until I reached them, and it was then too late to retreat," said Wharton, sullenly. "I came out, as my father has mentioned, to see my friends, understanding your parties to be at Peekskill, and near the Highlands, or surely I would not have ventured."

"All this may be very true, but the affair of André has made us on the alert. When treason reaches the grade of general

officers, Captain Wharton, it behooves the friends of liberty to be vigilant."

Henry bowed to this remark in distant silence, but Sarah ventured to urge something in behalf of her brother. The dragoon heard her politely and apparently with commiseration; but, willing to avoid useless and embarrassing petitions, he answered mildly:

"I am not the commander of the party, madam; Major Dunwoodie will decide what must be done with your brother; at all events, he will receive nothing but kind and gentle treatment."

"Dunwoodie!" exclaimed Frances, with a face in which the roses contended for the mastery with the paleness of apprehension; "thank God! then Henry is safe!"

Lawton regarded her with a mingled expression of pity and admiration; then, shaking his head doubtfully, he continued—

"I hope so; and, with your permission, we will leave the matter for his decision."

The color of Frances changed from the paleness of fear to the glow of hope. Her dread on behalf of her brother was certainly greatly diminished; yet her form shook, her breathing became short and irregular, and her whole frame gave tokens of extraordinary agitation. Her eyes rose from the floor to the dragoon, and were again fixed immovably on the carpet—she evidently wished to utter something, but was unequal to the effort. Miss Peyton was a close observer of these movements of her niece and, advancing with an air of feminine dignity inquired—

"Then, sir, we may expect the pleasure of Major Dunwoodie's company shortly?"

"Immediately, madam," answered the dragoon, withdrawing his admiring gaze from the person of Frances; "expresses are already on the road to announce to him our situation, and the intelligence will speedily bring him to this valley; unless, indeed, some private reasons may exist to make a visit particularly unpleasant."

"We shall always be happy to see Major Dunwoodie."

"Oh! doubtless; he is a general favor-

ite. May I presume on it so far as to ask leave to dismount and refresh my men, who compose a part of his squadron?"

There was a manner about the troops that would have made the omission of such a request easily forgiven by Mr. Wharton, but he was fairly entrapped by his own eagerness to conciliate, and it was useless to withhold a consent which he thought would probably be extorted; he therefore made the most of necessity, and gave such orders as would facilitate the wishes of Captain Lawton.

The officers were invited to take their morning's repast at the breakfast-table, and, having made their arrangements without, the invitation was frankly accepted. None of the watchfulness which was so necessary to their situation was neglected by the wary partisan. Patrols were seen on the distant hills, taking their protecting circuit around their comrades, who were enjoying, in the midst of dangers, a security that can only spring from the watchfulness of discipline and the indifference of habit.

The addition to the party at Mr. Wharton's table was only three, and they were all of them men who, under the rough exterior induced by actual and arduous service, concealed the manners of gentlemen. Consequently, the interruption to the domestic privacy of the family was marked by the observance of strict decorum. The ladies left the table to their guests, who proceeded, without much superfluous diffidence, to do proper honors to the hospitality of Mr. Wharton.

At length, Captain Lawton suspended for a moment his violent attacks on the buckwheat cakes, to inquire of the master of the house if there was not a peddler of the name of Birch who lived in the valley at times.

"At times only, I believe, sir," replied Mr. Wharton, cautiously; "he is seldom here; I may say I never see him."

"That is strange, too," said the trooper, looking at the disconcerted host intently, "considering he is your next neighbor; he must be quite domestic, sir; and to the ladies it must be somewhat inconvenient. I doubt not that that muslin

in the window-seat cost twice as much as he would have asked them for it."

Mr. Wharton turned in consternation, and saw some of the recent purchases scattered about the room.

The two subalterns struggled to conceal their smiles; but the captain resumed his breakfast with an eagerness that created a doubt whether he ever expected to enjoy another. The necessity of a supply from the dominion of Dinah soon, however, afforded another respite of which Lawton availed himself.

"I had a wish to break this Mr. Birch of his unsocial habits, and gave him a call this morning," he said; "had I found him within, I should have placed him where he would enjoy life in the midst of society, for a short time, at least."

"And where might that be, sir?" asked Mr. Wharton, conceiving it necessary to say something.

"The guard-room," said the trooper, dryly.

"What is the offense of poor Birch?" asked Miss Peyton, handing the dragoon a fourth dish of coffee.

"Poor!" cried the captain; "if he is poor, King George is a bad paymaster."

"Yes, indeed," said one of the subalterns; "his Majesty owes him a dukedom."

"And Congress a halter," continued the commanding officer, commencing anew on a fresh supply of the cakes.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Wharton, "that any neighbor of mine should incur the displeasure of our rulers."

"If I catch him," cried the dragoon, while buttering another cake, "he will dangle from the limbs of one of his namesakes."

"He would make no bad ornament, suspended from one of those locusts before his own door," added the lieutenant.

"Never mind," continued the captain, "I will have him yet before I'm a major."

As the language of these officers appeared to be sincere, and such as disappointed men in their rough occupations are but too apt to use, the Whartons thought it prudent to discontinue the subject. It

was no new intelligence to any of the family that Harvey Birch was distrusted, and greatly harassed, by the American army. His escapes from their hands, no less than his imprisonments, had been the conversation of the country in too many instances, and under circumstances of too great mystery, to be easily forgotten. In fact, no small part of the bitterness expressed by Captain Lawton against the peddler arose from the unaccountable disappearance of the latter, when intrusted to the custody of two of his most faithful dragoons.

A twelvemonth had not yet elapsed since Birch had been seen lingering near the headquarters of the commander-in-chief, and at a time when important movements were expected hourly to occur. So soon as the information of this fact was communicated to the officer whose duty it was to guard the avenues of the American camp, he dispatched Captain Lawton in pursuit of the peddler.

Acquainted with all the passes of the hills, and indefatigable in the discharge of his duty, the trooper had, with much trouble and toil, succeeded in effecting his object. The party had halted at a farmhouse for the purposes of refreshment, and the prisoner was placed in a room by himself, but under the keeping of the two men before mentioned; all that was known subsequently is that a woman was seen busily engaged in the employments of the household near the sentinels, and was particularly attentive to the wants of the captain until he was deeply engaged in the employments of the supper-table.

Afterward, neither woman nor peddler was to be found. The pack, indeed, was discovered open, and nearly empty, and a small door, communicating with a room adjoining to the one in which the peddler had been secured, was ajar.

Captain Lawton never could forgive the deception; his antipathies to his enemies were not very moderate, but this was adding an insult to his penetration that rankled deeply. He sat in portentous silence, brooding over the exploit of his prisoner, yet mechanically pursuing the business before him, until, after sufficient

time had passed to make a very comfortable meal, a trumpet suddenly broke on the ears of the party, sending its martial tones up the valley, in startling melody. The trooper rose instantly from the table, exclaiming :

"Quick, gentlemen, to your horses ; there comes Dunwoodie ;" and, followed by his officers, he precipitately left the room.

With the exception of the sentinels left to guard Captain Wharton, the dragoons mounted, and marched out to meet their comrades.

None of the watchfulness necessary in war, in which similarity of language, appearance and customs render prudence doubly necessary, was omitted by the cautious leader. On getting sufficiently near, however, to a body of horse of more than double his own number, to distinguish countenances, Lawton plunged his rowels into his charger, and in a moment he was by the side of his commander.

The ground in front of the cottage was again occupied by the horse ; and, observing the same precautions as before, the newly-arrived troops hastened to participate in the cheer prepared for their comrades.

CHAPTER VI.

—and let conquerors boast

Their fields of fame—he who in virtue arms
A young, warm spirit against beauty's charms,
Who feels her brightness, yet defies her thrall,
Is the best, bravest conqueror of them all."

THE ladies of the Wharton family had collected about a window, deeply interested in the scene we have related.

Sarah viewed the approach of her countrymen with a smile of contemptuous indifference, for she even undervalued the personal appearance of men whom she thought arrayed in the unholy cause of rebellion. Miss Peyton looked on the gallant show with an exulting pride, which arose in the reflection that the warriors before her were the chosen troops of her native colony ; while Frances gazed with

a singleness of interest that absorbed all other considerations.

The two parties had not yet joined, before her quick eye distinguished one horseman in particular from those around him. To her it appeared that even the steed of this youthful soldier seemed to be conscious that he sustained the weight of no common man—his hoofs but lightly touched the earth, and his airy tread was the curbed motion of a blooded charger.

The dragoon sat in the saddle with a firmness and ease that showed him master of himself and horse—his figure uniting the just proportions of strength and activity, being, tall, round, and muscular. To his officer Lawton made his report, and, side by side, they rode into the field opposite to the cottage.

The heart of Frances beat with a pulsation nearly stifling as he paused for a moment and took a survey of the building, with an eye whose dark and sparkling glance could be seen, notwithstanding the distance ; her color changed and for an instant, as she saw the youth throw himself from the saddle, she was compelled to seek relief for her trembling limbs in a chair.

The officer gave a few hasty orders to his second in command, walked rapidly into the lawn, and approached the cottage. Frances rose from her seat, and vanished from the apartment. The dragoon ascended the steps of the piazza, and had barely time to touch the outer door, when it opened to his admission.

The youth of Frances, when she left the city, had prevented her sacrificing, in conformity to the customs of that day, all her native beauties on the altar of fashion. Her hair, which was of a golden richness of color, was left, untortured, to fall in the natural ringlets of infancy, and it shaded a face which was glowing with the united charms of health, youth, and artlessness—her eyes spoke volumes, but her tongue was silent ; her hands were interlocked before her, and, aided by her taper form, bending forward in an attitude of expectation, gave a loveliness and an interest to her appearance that for a moment chained her lover in silence to the spot.

Frances silently led the way into a vacant parlor, opposite to the one in which the family were assembled, and, turning to the soldier, frankly placing both her hands in his own, exclaimed :

"Ah, Dunwoodie ! how happy, on many accounts, I am to see you ! I have brought you in here to prepare you to meet an unexpected friend in the opposite room."

"To whatever cause it may be owing," cried the youth, pressing her hands to his lips, "I, too, am happy in being able to see you alone. Frances, the probation you have decreed is cruel ; war and distance may shortly separate us forever."

"We must submit to the necessity which governs us. But it is not love-speeches I would hear now ; I have other and more important matters for your attention."

"What can be of more importance than to make you mine by a tie that will be indissoluble ! Frances, you are cold to me—me—from whose mind days of service and nights of alarm have never been able to banish your image for a single moment."

"Dear Dunwoodie," said Frances, softening nearly to tears, and again extending her hand to him, as the richness of her color gradually returned, "you know my sentiments—this war once ended, and you may take that hand forever—but I can never consent to tie myself to you by any closer union than already exists, so long as you are arrayed in arms against my only brother. Even now, that brother is awaiting your decision to restore him to liberty, or to conduct him to a probable death."

"Your brother ?" cried Dunwoodie, starting and turning pale ; "your brother ! explain yourself—what dreadful meaning is concealed in your words ?"

"Has not Captain Lawton told you of the arrest of Henry by himself this very morning ?" continued Frances, in a voice barely audible, and fixing on her lover a look of the deepest concern.

"He told me of arresting a captain of the 60th in disguise, but without mentioning where or whom," replied the major in a similar tone ; and dropping his head be-

tween his hands, he endeavored to conceal his feelings from his companion.

"Dunwoodie ! Dunwoodie !" exclaimed Frances, losing all her former confidence in the most fearful apprehensions, "what means this agitation ?" As the major slowly raised his face, in which was pictured the most expressive concern, she continued, "Surely, surely, you will not betray your friend, my brother—your brother—to an ignominious death ?"

"Frances !" exclaimed the young man in agony, "what can I do ?"

"Do !" she repeated, gazing at him wildly ; "would Major Dunwoodie yield his friend to his enemies—the brother of his betrothed wife ?"

"Oh, speak not so unkindly to me, dearest Miss Wharton—my own Frances. I would this moment die for you—for Henry—but I cannot forget my duty—cannot forfeit my honor ; you yourself would be the first to despise me if I did."

"Peyton Dunwoodie !" said Frances, solemnly and with a face of ashy paleness, "you have told me—you have sworn that you loved me—"

"I do," interrupted the soldier, with fervor—but, motioning for silence, she continued, in a voice that trembled with her fears :

"Do you think I can throw myself into the arms of a man whose hands are stained with the blood of my only brother ?"

"Frances ! you wring my very heart ;" then pausing to struggle with his feelings he endeavored to force a smile, as he added, "but, after all, we may be torturing ourselves with unnecessary fears, and Henry, when I know the circumstances, may be nothing more than a prisoner of war ; in which case, I could liberate him on parole."

There is no more delusive passion than hope ; and it seems to be the happy privilege of youth to cull all the pleasure that can be gathered from its indulgence. It is when we are most worthy of confidence ourselves that we are least apt to distrust others ; and what we think ought to be, we are prone to think will be.

The half-formed expectations of the

young soldier were communicated to the desponding sister more by the eye than the voice, and the blood rushed again to her cheek, as she cried :

"Oh ! there can be no just grounds to doubt it; I knew—I knew—Dunwoodie, you would never desert us in the hour of our greatest need ! " The violence of her feelings prevailed, and the agitated girl found relief in a flood of tears.

The office of consoling those we love is one of the dearest prerogatives of affection ; and Major Dunwoodie, although but little encouraged by his own momentary suggestion of relief, could not undeceive the lovely girl, who leaned on his shoulder, as he wiped the traces of her feeling from her face, with a trembling, but reviving confidence, in the safety of her brother and the protection of her lover.

Frances having sufficiently recovered her recollection to command herself, now eagerly led the way into the opposite room, to communicate to her family the pleasing intelligence which she already conceived so certain.

Dunwoodie followed her reluctantly, and with forebodings of the result ; but a few moments brought him into the presence of his relatives, and he summoned all his resolution to meet the trial with firmness.

The salutations of the young men were cordial and frank, and, on the part of Henry Wharton, as collected as if nothing had occurred to disturb his self-possession.

The abhorrence of being, in any manner, auxiliary to the arrest of his friend ; the danger to the life of Captain Wharton ; and the heart-breaking declaration of Frances, had, however, created an uneasiness in the bosom of Major Dunwoodie which all his efforts could not conceal. His reception by the rest of the family was kind and sincere, both from old regard and remembrance of former obligations, heightened by the anticipations they could not fail to read in the expressive eyes of the blushing girl by his side. After exchanging greetings with every member of the family, Major Dunwoodie beckoned to the sentinel, whom the wary prudence of Captain Lawton had left in charge of

the prisoner, to leave the room. Turning to Captain Wharton, he inquired mildly :

"Tell me, Henry, the circumstances of this disguise, in which Captain Lawton reports you to have been found, and remember—remember—Captain Wharton—your answers are entirely voluntary."

"The disguise was used by me, Major Dunwoodie," replied the English officer, gravely, "to enable me to visit my friends without incurring the danger of becoming a prisoner of war."

"But you did not wear it until you saw the troop of Lawton approaching?"

"Oh ! no," interrupted Frances, eagerly, forgetting all the circumstances in her anxiety for her brother ; "Sarah and myself placed them on him when the dragoons appeared ; it was our awkwardness that led to the discovery."

The countenance of Dunwoodie brightened, as, turning his eyes in fondness on the speaker, he listened to her explanation.

"Probably some articles of your own," he continued, "which were at hand, and were used on the spur of the moment."

"No," said Wharton, with dignity ; "the clothes were worn by me from the city, they were procured for the purpose to which they were applied, and I intended to use them in my return this very day."

The appalled Frances shrank back from between her brother and lover, where her ardent feelings had carried her, as the whole truth glanced over her mind, and she sank into her seat, gazing wildly on the young men.

"But the pickets—the party at the Plains?" added Dunwoodie, turning pale.

"I passed them, too, in disguise. I made use of this pass, for which I paid ; and as it bears the name of Washington, I presume it is forged."

Dunwoodie caught the paper from his hand, eagerly, and stood gazing on the signature for some time in silence, during which the soldier gradually prevailed over the man ; when he turned to the prisoner, with a searching look, as he asked :

"Captain Wharton, whence did you procure this paper?"

"That is a question, I conceive, Major Dunwoodie has no right to ask."

"Your pardon, sir, my feelings have led me into an impropriety."

Mr. Wharton, who had been a deeply interested auditor, now so far conquered his feelings as to say, "Surely, Major Dunwoodie, the paper cannot be material; such artifices are used daily in war."

"This name is no counterfeit," said the dragoon, studying the characters and speaking in a low voice; "is treason yet among us undiscovered? The confidence of Washington has been abused, for the fictitious name is in a different hand from the pass. Captain Wharton, my duty will not suffer me to grant you a parole; you must accompany me to the Highlands."

"I did not expect otherwise, Major Dunwoodie."

Dunwoodie turned slowly towards the sisters, when the figure of Frances once more arrested his gaze. She had risen from her seat, and stood again with her hands clasped before him in an attitude of petition; feeling himself unable to contend longer with his feelings, he made a hurried excuse for a temporary absence, and left the room. Frances followed him, and, obedient to the direction of the eye, the soldier re-entered the apartment in which had been their first interview.

"Major Dunwoodie," said Frances, in a voice barely audible, as she beckoned to him to be seated; her cheek, which had been of a chilling whiteness, was flushed with a suffusion that crimsoned her whole countenance; she struggled with herself for a moment, and continued—"I have already acknowledged to you my esteem; even now, when you most painfully distress me, I wish not to conceal it. Believe me, Henry is innocent of everything but imprudence. Our country can sustain no wrong." Again she paused, and almost gasped for breath; her color changed rapidly from red to white, until the blood rushed into her face, covering her features with the brightest vermilion; and she added hastily in an undertone, "I have promised, Dunwoodie, when peace shall be restored to our country, to

become your wife; give to my brother his liberty on parole, and I will this day go with you to the altar, follow you to the camp, and, in becoming a soldier's bride, learn to endure a soldier's privations."

Dunwoodie seized the hand which the blushing girl, in her ardor, had extended toward him, and pressed it for a moment to his bosom; then rising from his seat, he paced the room in excessive agitation.

"Frances, say no more, I conjure you, unless you wish to break my heart."

"You then reject my offered hand?" she said, rising with dignity, though her pale cheek and quivering lip plainly showed the conflicting passions within.

"Reject it! Have I not sought it with entreaties—with tears? Has it not been the goal of all my earthly wishes? But to take it under such conditions would be to dishonor both. We will hope for better things. Henry must be acquitted; perhaps not tried. No intercession of mine shall be wanting, you must well know; and believe me, Frances, I am not without favor with Washington."

"That very paper, that abuse of his confidence to which you allude, will steel him to my brother's case. If threats or entreaties could move his stern sense of justice, would André have suffered?" As Frances uttered these words, she fled from the room in despair.

Dunwoodie remained for a minute nearly stupefied; and then he followed with a view to vindicate himself, and to relieve her apprehensions. On entering the hall that divided the two parlors, he was met by a small ragged boy, who looked one moment at his dress, and placing a piece of paper in his hands, immediately vanished through the outer door of the building. The bewildered state of his mind, and the suddenness of the occurrence, gave the major barely time to observe the messenger to be a country lad, meanly attired, and that he held in his hand one of those toys which are to be bought in cities, and which he now apparently contemplated with the conscious pleasure of having fairly purchased, by the performance of the service required. The soldier turned his eyes to the subject of the note.

It was written on a piece of torn and soiled paper, and in a hand barely legible; but, after some little labor, he was able to make out as follows:

*"The rig'lars are at hand, horse and foot."**

* There died a few years since, in Bedford, Westchester, a yeoman named Elisha H—. This person was employed by Washington as one of his most confidential spies. By the conditions of their bargain, H— was never to be required to deal with third parties, since his risks were two imminent. He was allowed to enter also in the service of Sir Henry Clinton; and so much confidence had Washington in his love of country and discretion, that he was often intrusted with the minor military movements, in order that he might enhance his value with the English general by communicating them. In this manner, H— had continued to serve for a long period, when chance brought him into the city (then held by the British) at a moment when an expedition was about to quit it, to go against a small post established at Bedford, his native village, where the Americans had a depot of provisions. H— easily ascertained the force and destination of the detachment ordered on this service, but he was at a loss in what manner to communicate his information to the officer in command at Bedford, without betraying his own true character to a third person. There was no time to reach Washington, and under the circumstances, he finally resolved to hazard a short note to the American commandant, stating the danger, and naming the time when the attack might be expected. To this note he even ventured to affix his own initials E. H., though he had disguised the hand, under a belief that, as he knew himself to be suspected by his countrymen, it might serve to give more weight to his warning. His family being at Bedford, the note was transmitted with facility, and arrived in good season, H— himself remaining in New York.

The American commandant did what every sensible officer, in a similar case, would have done. He sent a courier with the note to Washington, demanding orders, while he prepared his little party to make the best defense in his power.

The headquarters of the American army were, at that time, in the Highlands. Fortunately the express met Washington on a tour of observation near their entrance. The note was given to him, and he read it in the saddle; adding, in pencil, "Believe all that E. H. tells you. George Washington." He returned it to the courier, with an injunction to ride for life or death.

The courier reached Bedford after the British had made their attack. The commandant read the reply and put it in his pocket. The Americans were defeated, and their leader killed. The note of H—, with the line written on it by Washington, was found on his person.

The following day H— was summoned to the presence of Sir Henry Clinton. After the latter had put several general questions, he suddenly gave the note to the spy, and asked if he knew the handwriting, and demanding who the E. H. was. "It is Elijah Hadden, the spy you hanged yesterday at Powles Hook." The readiness of this answer, connected with the fact that a spy having the same in-

Dunwoodie started; and, forgetting everything but the duties of a soldier, he precipitately left the house. While walking rapidly toward the troops, he noticed on a distant hill a vedette riding with speed; several pistols were fired in quick succession; and the next instant the trumpets of the corps rang in his ears with the enlivening strain of "To arms!" By the time he had reached the ground occupied by his squadron, the major saw that every man was in active motion. Lawton was already in the saddle, eyeing the opposite extremity of the valley with the eagerness of expectation, and crying to the musicians, in tones but little lower than their own:

"Sound away, my lads, and let these Englishmen know that the Virginia Horse are between them and the end of their journey."

The vedettes and patrols now came pouring in, each making in succession his hasty report to the commanding officer, who gave his orders coolly, and with a promptitude that made obedience certain. Once only, as he wheeled his horse to ride over the ground in front, did Dunwoodie trust himself with a look at the cottage, and his heart beat with unusual rapidity as he saw a female figure standing, with clasped hands, at a window of the room in which he had met Frances. The distance was too great to distinguish her features, but the soldier could not doubt that it was his mistress. The paleness of his cheek and the languor of his eye endured but for a moment longer. As he rode toward the intended battleground a flush of ardor began to show itself on his sunburnt features; and his dragoons, who studied the face of their leader as the best index of their own fate, saw again the wonted flashing of the eyes, and the cheerful animation, which they had so often witnessed on the eve of a battle. By the additions of the vedettes and parties that had been out, and which now had all joined, the whole number of the horse was

initials had been executed the day before, and the coolness of H—, saved him. Sir Henry Clinton allowed him to quit his presence, and he never saw him afterward.

increased to nearly two hundred. There was also a small body of men, whose ordinary duties were those of guides, but who, in cases of emergency, were embodied and did duty as foot soldiers; these were dismounted, and proceeded, by the order of Dunwoodie, to level the few fences which might interfere with the intended movements of the cavalry.

The neglect of husbandry, which had been occasioned by the war, left this task comparatively easy. The long lines of heavy and durable walls, which now sweep through every part of the county, forty years ago were unknown. The slight and tottering fences of stone were then used more to clear the land for the purposes of cultivation than as permanent barriers, and required the constant attention of the husbandman to preserve them against the fury of the tempests and the frosts of winter. Some few of them had been built with more care immediately around the dwelling of Mr. Wharton; but those which had intersected the vale below were now generally a pile of ruins, over which the horses of the Virginians would bound with the fleetness of the wind. Occasionally a short line yet preserved its erect appearance; but as none of these crossed the ground on which Dunwoodie intended to act, there remained only the slighter fences of rails to be thrown down. Their duty was hastily but effectually performed; and the guides withdrew to the post assigned to them for the approaching fight.

Major Dunwoodie had received from his scouts all the intelligence concerning his foe which was necessary to enable him to make his arrangements. The bottom of the valley was an even plain, that fell with a slight inclination from the foot of the hills on either side, to the level of a natural meadow that wound through the country on the banks of a small stream, by whose waters it was often inundated and fertilized. This brook was easily forded in any part of its course; and the only impediment it offered to the movements of the horse was in a place where it changed its bed from the western to the

eastern side of the valley, and where its banks were more steep and difficult of access than common. Here the highway crossed it by a rough wooden bridge, as it did again at the distance of half a mile above the Locusts.

The hills on the eastern side of the valley were abrupt, and frequently obtruded themselves in rocky prominences into its bosom, lessening the width to half the usual dimensions. One of these projections was but a short distance in the rear of the squadron of dragoons, and Dunwoodie directed Captain Lawton to withdraw, with two troops, behind its cover. The officer obeyed with a kind of surly reluctance, that was, however, somewhat lessened by the anticipations of the effect his sudden appearance would make on the enemy. Dunwoodie knew his man, and had selected the captain for this service both because he feared his precipitation in the field, and knew, when needed, his support would never fail to appear. It was only in front of the enemy that Captain Lawton was hasty; at all other times his discernment and self-possession were consummately preserved; but he sometimes forgot them in his eagerness to engage. On the left of the ground on which Dunwoodie intended to meet his foe, was a close wood which skirted that side of the valley for the distance of a mile. Into this, then, the guides retired and took their station near its edge, in such a manner as would enable them to maintain a scattering but effectual fire on the advancing columns of the enemy.

It cannot be supposed that all these preparations were made unheeded by the inmates of the cottage; on the contrary, every feeling which can agitate the human breast, in witnessing such a scene, was actively alive. Mr. Wharton alone saw no hopes to himself in the determination of the conflict. If the British should prevail, his son would be liberated; but what then would be his own fate? He had hitherto preserved his neutral character in the midst of trying circumstances. The fact of his having a son in the royal, or, as it was called, the regular army, had very nearly brought his estates to the

hammer. Nothing had obviated this result but the powerful interest of the relation, who held a high political rank in the state, and his own vigilant prudence. In his heart he was a devoted loyalist; and when the blushing Frances had communicated to him the wishes of her lover, on their return from the American camp the preceding spring, the consent he had given to her future union with a rebel was as much extracted by the increasing necessity which existed for his obtaining republican support, as by any considerations for the happiness of his child. Should his son now be rescued, he would, in the public mind, be united with him as a plotter against the freedom of the states; and should he remain a captive and undergo the impending trial, the consequences might be still more dreadful. Much as he loved his wealth, Mr. Wharton loved his children better; and he sat gazing on the movements without with a listless vacancy in his countenance that fully denoted his imbecility of character.

Far different were the feelings of the son. Captain Wharton had been left in the keeping of two dragoons, one of whom marched to and fro on the piazza with a measured tread, and the other had been directed to continue in the same apartment with the prisoner. The young man witnessed all the movements of Dunwoodie with admiration, mingled with fearful anticipations of the consequences to his friends. He particularly disliked the ambush of the detachment under Lawton, who could be distinctly seen from the windows of the cottage, cooling his impatience by pacing on foot the ground in front of his men. Henry Wharton threw several hasty and inquiring glances around to see if no means of liberation would offer, but invariably found the eyes of his sentinel fixed on him with the watchfulness of an Argus. He longed with the ardor of youth to join in the glorious fray, but was compelled to remain a dissatisfied spectator of a scene in which he would so cheerfully have been an actor. Miss Peyton and Sarah continued gazing on the preparations with varied emotions, in which concern for the fate of the captain

formed the most prominent feeling, until the moment the shedding of blood seemed approaching, when, with the timidity of their sex, they sought the retirement of an inner room. Not so Frances; she returned to the apartment where she had left Dunwoodie, and from one of its windows had been a deeply interested spectator of all his movements. The wheelings of the troops, the deadly preparations, had all been unnoticed; she saw her lover only, and with mingled emotions of admiration and dread that nearly chilled her. At one moment the blood rushed to her heart, as she saw the young warrior riding through his ranks, giving life and courage to all whom he addressed; and the next it curdled with the thought that the very gallantry she so much valued might prove the means of placing the grave between her and the object of her regard. Frances gazed until she could look no longer.

In a field on the left of the cottage, and at a short distance in the rear of the troops, was a small group, whose occupation seemed to differ from that of all around them. They were in number only three, being two men and a mulatto boy. The principal personage of this party was a man whose leanness made his really tall stature appear excessive. He wore spectacles—was unarmed, had dismounted, and seemed to be dividing his attention between a cigar, a book, and the incidents of the field before him. To this party Frances determined to send a note directed to Dunwoodie. She wrote hastily, with a pencil, "*Come to me, Peyton, if it be but for a moment;*" and Caesar emerged from the cellar-kitchen, taking the precaution to go by the rear of the building, to avoid a sentinel on the piazza, who had very cavalierly ordered all the family to remain housed. The black delivered the note to the gentleman, with a request that it might be forwarded to Major Dunwoodie. It was the surgeon of the horse to whom Caesar addressed himself; and the teeth of the African chattered as he saw displayed upon the ground the several instruments which were in preparation for the anticipated operations. The doctor himself seemed to

view the arrangement with great satisfaction, as he deliberately raised his eyes from his book to order the boy to convey the note to his commanding officer, and then dropping them quietly on the page, he continued his occupation. Cæsar was slowly retiring, as the third personage, who by his dress might be an inferior assistant of the surgical department; coolly inquired, "if he would have a leg taken off?" This question seemed to remind the black of the existence of those limbs; for he made such use of them as to reach the piazza at the same instant that Major Dunwoodie rode up, at half-speed. The brawny sentinel squared himself, and poised his sword with military precision, as he stood on his post while his officer passed; but no sooner had the door closed than, turning to the negro, he said, sharply:

"Harkee, blackey, if you quit the house again without my knowledge, I shall turn barber, and shave off one of those ebony ears with this razor."

Thus assailed in another member, Cæsar hastily retreated into his kitchen, muttering something in which the words "Skinner, and rebel rascal," formed a principal part of his speech.

"Major Dunwoodie," said Frances to her lover as he entered, "I may have done you injustice; if I have appeared harsh——"

The emotions of the agitated girl prevailed, and she burst into tears.

"Frances," cried the soldier, with warmth, "you are never harsh, never unjust, but when you doubt my love."

"Ah! Dunwoodie," added the sobbing girl, "you are about to risk your life in battle; remember that there is one heart whose happiness is built on your safety; brave I know you are; be prudent——"

"For your sake?" inquired the delighted youth.

"For my sake," replied Frances, in a voice barely audible, and dropping on his bosom.

Dunwoodie folded her to his heart, and was about to speak, as a trumpet sounded in the southern end of the vale. Inprinting one long kiss of affection on her unre-

sisting lips, the soldier tore himself from his mistress and hastened to the scene of strife.

Frances threw herself on a sofa, buried her head under its cushion, and with her shawl drawn over her face, to exclude as much of sound as possible, continued there until the shouts of the combatants, the rattling of the firearms, and the thundering tread of the horses had ceased.

CHAPTER VII.

—The game's afoot:
Follow your spirit.—SHAKESPEARE.

THE rough and unimproved face of the country, the frequency of covers, together with the great distance from their own country, and the facilities afforded them for rapid movements to the different points of the war by the undisputed command of the ocean, had united to deter the English from employing a heavy force in cavalry, in their early efforts to subdue the revolted colonies.

Only one regiment of regular horse was sent from the mother-country during the struggle. But legions and independent corps were formed in different places, as it best accorded with the views of the royal commanders, or suited the exigency of the times. These were not infrequently composed of men raised in the colonies, and at other times drafts were had from the regiments of the line, and the soldier was made to lay aside the musket and bayonet, and taught to wield the saber and carbine. One particular body of the subsidiary troops was included in this arrangement, and the Hessian yagers were transformed into a corps of heavy and inactive horse.

Opposed to them were the hardiest spirits of America. Most of the cavalry regiments of the continental army were led and officered by gentlemen from the south. The high and haughty courage of the commanders had communicated itself to the privates, who were men selected with care and great attention to the service they were intended to perform.

While the British were confined to their

empty conquests in the possession of a few of the larger towns, or marched through counties that were swept of everything like military supplies, the light troops of their enemies had the range of the whole interior.

The sufferings of the line of the American army were great beyond example; but possessing the power, and feeling themselves engaged in a cause which justified severity, the cavalry officers were vigilant in providing for their wants, and the horses were well mounted, well fed, and consequently eminently effective. Perhaps the world could not furnish more brave, enterprising and resistless corps of light cavalry than a few that were in the continental service at the time of which we write.

Dunwoodie's men had often tried their prowess against the enemy, and they now sat panting to be led once more against foes who they seldom charged in vain. Their wishes were soon to be gratified, for their commander had scarcely time to regain his seat in the saddle before a body of the enemy came sweeping round the base of the hill which intersected the view to the south. A few minutes enabled the major to distinguish their character. In one troop he saw the green coats of the Cow-boys, and in the other the leathern helmets and wooden saddles of the yagers. Their numbers were about equal to the body under his immediate orders.

On reaching the open space near the cottage of Harvey Birch, the enemy halted and drew up his men in line, evidently making preparations for a charge. At this moment a column of foot appeared in the vale, and pressed forward to the bank of the brook we have already mentioned.

Major Dunwoodie was not less distinguished by coolness and judgment than, where occasion offered, by his dauntless intrepidity. He at once saw his advantage, and determined to profit by it. The column he led began slowly to retire from the field, when the youthful German, who commanded the enemy's horse, fearful of missing an easy conquest, gave the word to charge. Few troopers were more hardy than the Cow-boys; they sprang eagerly

forward in the pursuit, with a confidence created by the retiring foe and the column in their rear; the Hessians followed more slowly, but in better order. The trumpets of the Virginians now sounded long and lively; they were answered by a strain from the party in ambush that went to the hearts of their enemies. The column of Dunwoodie wheeled in perfect order, opened, and as the word charge was given the troops of Lawton emerged from their cover, with their leader in advance, waving his saber over his head and shouting in a voice that was heard above the clangor of the martial music.

The charge threatened too much for the refugee troop. They scattered in every direction, flying from the field as fast as their horses, the chosen beasts of Westchester, could carry them. Only a few were hurt; but such as did meet the arms of their avenging countrymen never survived the blow to tell who struck it. It was upon the poor vassals of the German tyrant that the shock fell. Disciplined to the most exact obedience, these ill-fated men met the charge bravely, but they were swept before the mettled horses and nervous arms of their antagonists like chaff before the wind. Many of them were literally ridden down, and Dunwoodie soon saw the field without an opposing foe. The proximity of the infantry prevented pursuit, and behind its column the few Hessians who escaped unhurt sought protection.

The more cunning refugees dispersed in small bands, taking various and devious routes back to their old station in front of Harlem. Many were the sufferers in cattle, furniture and person, that were created by this rout; for the dispersion of a troop of Cow-boys was only the extension of an evil.

Such a scene could not be expected to be acted so near them, and the inmates of the cottage take no interest in the result. In truth, the feelings it excited pervaded every bosom, from the kitchen to the parlor. Terror and horror had prevented the ladies from being spectators, but they did not feel the less. Frances continued lying in the posture we have mentioned, offering

up fervent and incoherent petitions for the safety of her countrymen, although in her inmost heart she had personified her nation by the graceful image of Peyton Dunwoodie. Her aunt and sister were less exclusive in their devotions; but Sarah began to feel, as the horrors of war were thus brought home to her senses, less pleasure in her anticipated triumphs.

The inmates of Mr. Wharton's kitchen were four—namely, Cæsar and his spouse, their granddaughter; a jet black damsel of twenty, and the boy before alluded to. The blacks were the remnants of a race of negroes which had been entailed on his estate from Mr. Wharton's maternal ancestors, who were descended from the early Dutch colonists. Time, depravity, and death had reduced them to this small number; and the boy, who was white, had been added by Miss Peyton to the establishment, as an assistant, to perform the ordinary services of footman. Cæsar, after first using the precaution to place himself under the cover of an angle in the wall, for a screen against any roving bullet which might be traversing the air, became an amused spectator of the skirmish. The sentinel on the piazza was at the distance of but a few feet from him, and he entered into the spirit of the chase with all the ardor of a tried bloodhound; he noticed the approach of the black, and his judicious position, with a smile of contempt, as he squared himself toward the enemy, offering his unprotected breast to any dangers which might come.

After considering the arrangement of Cæsar for a moment, with ineffable disdain, the dragoon said, with great coolness:

"You seem very careful of that beautiful person of yours, Mr. Blueskin."

"A bullet hurt a colored man as much as a white," muttered the black, surlily, casting a glance of much satisfaction at his rampart.

"Suppose I make the experiment," returned the sentinel; as he spoke he deliberately drew a pistol from his belt and leveled it at the black. Cæsar's teeth chattered at the appearance of the dragoon, although he believed nothing serious

was intended. At this moment the column of Dunwoodie began to retire, and the royal cavalry commenced their charge.

"There, Mister Light-Horseman," said Cæsar, eagerly, who believed the Americans were retiring in earnest; "why you rebels don't fight—see—see how King George's men make Major Dunwoodie run! Good gentlemen, too, but he don't like to fight a rig'lar."

"Damn your regulars," cried the other, fiercely; "wait a minute, blackey, and you'll see Captain Jack Lawton come out from behind yonder hill, and scatter these Cow-boys like wild geese who've lost their leader."

Cæsar supposed the party under Lawton to have sought the shelter of the hill from motives similar to that which had induced him to place the wall between himself and the battle-ground; but the fact soon verified the trooper's prophecy, and the black witnessed with consternation the total rout of the royal horse.

The sentinel manifested his exultation at the success of his comrades with loud shouts, which soon brought his companion, who had been left in the more immediate charge of Henry Wharton, to the open window of the parlor.

"See, Tom, see," cried the delighted trooper, "how Captain Lawton makes that Hessian's leather cap fly; and now the major has killed the officer's horse—zounds, why didn't he kill the Dutchman, and save the horse?"

A few pistols were discharged at the flying Cow-boys, and a spent bullet broke a pane of glass within a few feet of Cæsar. Imitating the posture of the great tempter of our race, the black sought the protection of the inside of the building, and immediately ascended to the parlor.

The lawn in front of the Locusts was hidden from the view of the road by a close line of shrubbery, and the horses of the two dragoons had been left, linked together, under its shelter to await the movements of their masters.

At this moment two Cow-boys, who had been cut off from a retreat to their own party, rode furiously through the gate,

with an intention of escaping to the open wood in the rear of the cottage.

The victorious Americans pressed the retreating Germans until they had driven them under the protection of the fire of the infantry; and feeling themselves, in the privacy of the lawn, relieved from any immediate danger, the predatory warriors yielded to a temptation that few of the corps were ever known to resist—opportunity and horseflesh. With a hardihood and presence of mind that could only exist from long practice in similar scenes, they made toward their intended prizes, by an almost spontaneous movement. They were busily engaged in separating the fastenings of the horses, when the trooper on the piazza discharged his pistols, and rushed, sword in hand, to the rescue.

The entrance of Cæsar into the parlor had induced the wary dragoon within to turn his attention more closely on his prisoner; but this new interruption drew him again to the window. He threw his body out of the building, and with dreadful imprecations endeavored by his threats and appearance to frighten the marauders from their prey. The moment was enticing. Three hundred of his comrades were within a mile of the cottage; unriden horses were running at large in every direction, and Henry Wharton seized the unconscious sentinel by the legs and threw him headlong into the lawn. Cæsar vanished from the room, and drew a bolt of the outer door.

The fall of the soldier was not great, and recovering his feet, he turned his fury for a moment on his prisoner. To scale the window in the face of such an enemy was, however, impossible, and on trial he found the main entrance barred.

His comrade now called loudly on him for aid, and forgetful of everything else, the discomfited trooper rushed to his assistance. One horse was instantly liberated, but the other was already fastened to the saddle of a Cow-boy, and the four retired behind the building, cutting furiously at each other with their sabers, and making the air resound with their imprecations. Cæsar threw the outer door open, and pointing to the remaining horse,

that was quietly biting the faded herbage of the lawn, he exclaimed:

“Run—now—run—Massa Harry, run.”

“Yes,” cried the youth, as he vaulted into the saddle, “now, indeed, my honest fellow, is the time to run.” He beckoned hastily to his father, who stood at the window in speechless anxiety, with his hands extended toward his child in the attitude of benediction, and adding, “God bless you, Cæsar, salute the girls,” he dashed through the gate with the rapidity of lightning.

The African watched him with anxiety as he gained the highway, saw him incline to the right, and, riding furiously under the brow of some rocks, which on that side rose perpendicularly, disappear behind a projection, which soon hid him from view.

The delighted Cæsar closed the door, pushing bolt after bolt, and turning the key until it would turn no more, soliloquizing the whole time on the happy escape of his young master.

“How well he ride—teach him a good deal myself—salute a young lady—Miss Fanny wouldn’t let old colored man kiss a red cheek.”

When the fortune of the day was decided, and the time arrived for the burial of the dead, two Cow-boys and a Virginian were found in the rear of the Locusts, to be included in the number.

Happily for Henry Wharton, the searching eyes of his captor were examining, through a pocket-glass, the column of infantry that still held its position on the bank of the stream, while the remnants of the Hessian yagers were seeking its friendly protection. His horse was of the best blood of Virginia, and carried him with the swiftness of the wind along the valley; and the heart of the youth was already beating tumultuously with pleasure at his deliverance, when a well-known voice reached his startled ear, crying aloud:

“Bravely done, captain! Don’t spare the whip, and turn to your left before you cross the brook.”

Wharton turned his head in surprise and saw, sitting on the point of a jutting rock that commanded a bird’s-eye view of

the valley, his former guide, Harvey Birch. His pack, much diminished in size, lay at the feet of the peddler, who waved his hat to the youth exultingly as the latter flew by him. The English captain took the advice of the mysterious being, and finding a good road which led to the highway that intersected the valley, turned down its direction, and was soon opposite to his friends. The next minute he crossed the bridge and stopped his charger before his old acquaintance, Colonel Wellmere.

"Captain Wharton!" exclaimed the astonished commander of the English troops, "dressed in mohair and mounted on a rebel dragoon horse! Are you from the clouds in this attire, and in such a style?"

"Thank God!" cried the youth, recovering his breath, "I am safe, and have escaped from the hands of my enemies; but five minutes since and I was a prisoner and threatened with the gallows."

"The gallows, Captain Wharton! Surely those traitors to the king would never dare to commit another murder in cold blood; is it not enough that they took the life of André? Wherefore did they threaten you with a similar fate?"

"Under the pretense of a similar offense," said the captain, briefly explaining the maner of his capture, the grounds of his personal apprehensions, and the method of his escape. By the time he had concluded his narration the fugitive Germans were collected in the rear of the column of infantry, and Colonel Wellmere cried aloud:

"From my soul I congratulate you, my brave friend; mercy is a quality with which these traitors are unacquainted, and you are doubly fortunate in escaping from their hands uninjured. Prepare yourself to grant me your assistance and I will soon afford you a noble revenge."

"I do not think there was danger of personal outrage to any man, Colonel Wellmere, from a party that Major Dunwoodie commands," returned young Wharton, with a slight glow on his face; "his character is above the imputation of such an offense; neither do I think it altogether prudent to cross this brook

into the open plain in the face of those Virginian Horse, flushed as they must be with the success they have just obtained."

"Do you call the rout of those irregulars and these sluggish Hessians a deed to boast of?" said the other with a contemptuous smile; "you speak of the affair, Captain Wharton, as if your boasted Mr. Dunwoodie, for major he is none, has discomfited the body-guards of your king."

"And I must be allowed to say, Colonel Wellmere, that if the body-guards of my king were in yon field, they would meet a foe that it would be dangerous to despise. Sir, my boasted Mr. Dunwoodie is the pride of Washington's army as a cavalry officer," cried Henry with warmth.

"Dunwoodie — Dunwoodie!" repeated the colonel, slowly; "surely I have met the gentleman before."

"I have been told you once saw him for a moment at the town residence of my sisters," replied Wharton, with a lurking smile.

"Ah! I do remember me of such a youth; and does the most potent congress of these rebellious colonies intrust their soldiers to the leading of such a warrior?"

"Ask the commander of yon Hessian horse whether he thinks Major Dunwoodie worthy of the confidence."

Colonel Wellmere was far from wanting that pride which makes a man bear himself bravely in the presence of his enemies. He had served in America a long time, without ever meeting with any but new-raised levies, or the militia of the country. These would sometimes fight, and that fearlessly, but they as often chose to run away without pulling a trigger. He was too apt to judge from externals, and thought it impossible for men whose gaiters were so clean, whose tread so regular, and who wheeled with so much accuracy, to be beaten. In addition to all these, they were Englishmen, and their success was certain. Colonel Wellmere had never been kept much in the field, or these notions, which he had brought with him from home, and which had been greatly increased by the vaporings of a garrisoned town, would have long since vanished. He listened to the warm reply of Cap-

tain Wharton with a supercilious smile, and then inquired :

"You would not have us retire, sir, before these boasted horsemen, without doing something that may deprive them of part of the glory which you appear to think they have gained?"

"I would have you advised, Colonel Wellmere, of the danger you are about to encounter."

"Danger is but an unseemly word for a soldier," continued the British commander, with a sneer.

"And one as little dreaded by the 60th as any corps who wear the royal livery," cried Henry Wharton, fiercely; "give but the word to charge, and let our actions speak."

"Now again I know my young friend," said Wellmere, soothingly; "but if you have anything to say before we fight that can in any manner help us in our attack, we'll listen. You know the force of the rebels: are there more of them in ambush?"

"Yes," replied the youth, chafing still with the other's sneers; "in the skirt of this wood on our right are a small party of foot; their horse are all before you."

"Where they will not continue long," cried Wellmere, turning to the new officers around him. "Gentlemen, we will cross the stream in column, and display on the plain beyond, or else we shall not be able to entice these valiant Yankees within the reach of our muskets. Captain Wharton, I claim your assistance as an aid-de-camp."

The youth shook his head with disapprobation of a movement which his good sense taught him was rash, but prepared with alacrity to perform his duty in the impending trial.

During this conversation, which was held at a small distance in advance of the British column, and in full view of the Americans, Dunwoodie had been collecting his scattered troops, securing his few prisoners, and retiring to the ground where he had been posted at the first appearance of his enemy. Satisfied with the success he had already obtained, and believing the English too wary to give him

an opportunity of harassing them farther, he was about to withdraw the guides, and, leaving a strong party on the ground to watch the movements of the regulars, to fall back a few miles to a favorable place for taking up his quarters for the night. Captain Lawton was reluctantly listening to the reasoning of his commander, and had brought out his favorite glass to see if no opening could be found for an advantageous attack, when he suddenly exclaimed:

"How's this? A blue coat among those scarlet gentry? As I hope to live to see old Virginia, it is my masquerading friend of the 60th, the handsome Captain Wharton, escaped from two of my best men!"

He had not done speaking when the survivor of these heroes joined his troop, bringing with him his own horse and those of the Cow-boys; he reported the death of his comrade and the escape of his prisoner. As the deceased was the immediate sentinel over the person of young Wharton, and the other was not to be blamed for defending the horses, which were more particularly under his care, his captain heard him with uneasiness, but without anger.

This intelligence made an entire change in the views of Major Dunwoodie. He saw at once that his own reputation was involved in the escape of his prisoner. The order to recall the guides was countermanded, and he now joined his second in command, watching, as eagerly as the impetuous Lawton himself, for some opening to assail his foe to advantage.

But two hours before and Dunwoodie had felt the chance which made Henry Wharton his captive as the severest blow he had ever sustained. Now he panted for an opportunity in which, by risking his own life, he might recapture his friend. All other considerations were lost in the goadings of a wounded spirit, and he might have soon emulated Lawton in hardihood, had not Wellmere and his troops at this moment crossed the brook into the open plain.

"There," cried the delighted captain, as he pointed out the movement with his finger, "there comes John Bull into the mouse trap and with eyes wide open."

"Surely," said Dunwoodie, eagerly, "he will not display his column in that flat. Wharton must tell him of the ambush. But if he does——"

"We will not leave him a dozen sound skins in his battalion," interrupted the other, springing into his saddle.

The truth was soon apparent; for the English column, after advancing for a short distance on the level land, displayed with an accuracy that would have done them honor on a field day in their own Hyde Park.

"Prepare to mount—mount!" cried Dunwoodie, the last words being repeated by Lawton in a tone that rang in the ears of Cæsar, who stood at the open window of the cottage. The black recoiled in dismay, having lost all his confidence in Captain Lawton's timidity; for he thought he yet saw him emerging from his cover, and waving his sword on high.

As the British line advanced slowly and in exact, order the guides opened a galling fire. It began to annoy that part of the royal troops which was nearest to them. Wellmere listened to the advice of the veteran who was next to him in rank, and ordered two companies to dislodge the American foot from their hiding-place. The movement created a slight confusion, and Dunwoodie seized the opportunity to charge. No ground could be more favorable for the maneuvers of horse, and the attack of the Virginians was irresistible. It was aimed chiefly at the bank opposite to the wood, in order to clear the Americans from the fire of their friends who were concealed, and it was completely successful. Wellmere, who was on the left of his line, was overthrown by the impetuous fury of his assailants. Dunwoodie was in time to save him from the impending blow of one of his men, and raised him from the ground, had him placed on a horse, and delivered to the custody of his orderly. The officer who had suggested the attack upon the guides had been intrusted with its execution, but the menace was sufficient for these irregulars. In fact, their duty was performed, and they retired along the skirt of the wood with intent to regain

their horses, which had been left under a guide at the upper end of the valley.

The left of the British line was outflanked by the Americans, who doubled in their rear, and thus made the rout in that quarter total. But the second in command, perceiving how the battle went, promptly wheeled his party, and threw in a heavy fire on the dragoons as they passed him to the charge; with this party was Henry Wharton, who had volunteered to assist in dispersing the guides; a ball struck his bridle-arm, and compelled him to change hands. As the dragoons dashed by them, rending the air with their shouts, and with trumpets sounding a lively strain, the charger ridden by the youth became ungovernable—he plunged, reared, and his rider being unable, with his wounded arm, to manage the impatient animal, Henry Wharton found himself, in less than a minute, unwillingly riding by the side of Captain Lawton. The dragoon comprehended at a glance the ludicrous situation of his new comrade, but had only time to cry aloud, before they plunged into the English line:

"The horse knows the righteous cause better than his rider. Captain Wharton, you are welcome to the ranks of freedom."

No time was lost, however, by Lawton, after the charge was completed, in securing his prisoner again; and, perceiving him to be hurt, he directed him to be conveyed to the rear.

The Virginian troopers dealt out their favors with no gentle hands on that part of the royal foot who were thus left in a great measure at their mercy. Dunwoodie, observing that the remnant of the Hessians had again ventured on the plain, led on in pursuit, and easily overtaking their light and half-fed horses, soon destroyed the remainder of the detachment.

In the meanwhile, great numbers of the English, taking advantage of the smoke in the field, were enabled to get in the rear of the body of their countrymen which still preserved its order in a line parallel to the wood, but which had been obliged to hold its fire from the fear of injuring friends as well as foes. The

fugitives were directed to form a second line within the wood itself, and under cover of the trees. This arrangement was not yet completed, when Captain Lawton called to a youth, who commanded the other troop left with that part of the force which remained on the ground, and proposed charging the unbroken line of the British. The proposal was as promptly accepted as it had been made, and the troops were arrayed for the purpose. The eagerness of their leader prevented the preparations necessary to insure success, and the horse, receiving a destructive fire as they advanced, were thrown into additional confusion. Both Lawton and his more juvenile comrade fell at this discharge.

Fortunately for the credit of the Virginians, Major Dunwoodie re-entered the field at this critical instant; he saw his troops in disorder; at his feet lay weltering in blood George Singleton, a youth endeared to him by numberless virtues, and Lawton was unhorsed and stretched on the plain. The eye of the youthful warrior flashed fire. Riding between this squadron and the enemy, in a voice that reached the hearts of his dragoons, he recalled them to their duty. His presence and words acted like magic. The clamor of voices ceased; the line was formed promptly and with exactitude; the charge sounded, and, led on by their commander, the Virginians swept across the plain with an impetuosity that nothing could withstand, and the field was instantly cleared of the enemy: those who were not destroyed sought a shelter in the woods. Dunwoodie slowly withdrew from the fire of the English who were covered by the trees, and commenced the painful duty of collecting his dead and wounded.

The sergeant charged with conducting Henry Wharton to a place where he might procure surgical aid, set about performing his duty with alacrity, in order to return as soon as possible to the scene of strife. They had not reached the middle of the plain, before the captain noticed a man whose appearance and occupation forcibly arrested his attention. His head was bald and bare, but a well-powdered wig was to be seen, half concealed in the pocket of his

breeches. His coat was off and his arms were naked to the elbow; blood had disfigured much of his dress, and his hands and even his face bore this mark of his profession; in his mouth was a cigar, in his right hand some instruments of strange formation, and in his left the remnants of an apple, with which he occasionally relieved the duty of the before-mentioned cigar. He was standing, lost in the contemplation of a Hessian who lay breathless before him. At a little distance were three or four of the guides, leaning on their muskets and straining their eyes in the direction of the combatants, and at his elbow stood a man who, from the implements in his hand and his bloody vestment, seemed an assistant.

"There, sir, is the doctor," said the attendant of Henry, very coolly; "he will patch up your arm in the twinkling of an eye;" and beckoning to the guides to approach, he whispered and pointed to his prisoner, and then galloped furiously toward his comrades.

Wharton advanced to the side of this strange figure, and observing himself to be unnoticed, was about to request his assistance, when the other broke silence in a soliloquy—

"Now, I know this man to have been killed by Captain Lawton, as well as if I had seen him strike the blow. How often have I strove to teach him the manner in which he can disable his adversary without destroying life. It is cruel thus unnecessarily to cut off the human race, and furthermore, such blows as these render professional assistance unnecessary; it is, in a measure, treating the lights of science with disrespect."

"If, sir, your leisure will admit," said Henry Wharton, "I must beg your attention to a slight hurt."

"Ah!" cried the other, starting, and examining him from head to foot, "you are from the field below; is there much business there, sir?"

"Indeed," answered Henry, accepting the offer of the surgeon to assist in removing his coat, "'tis a stirring time, I can assure you."

"Stirring!" repeated the surgeon, busi-

ly employed with his dressings. "You give me great pleasure, sir; for so long as they can stir there must be life; and while there is life, you know, there is hope; but here my art is of no use. I did put in the brains of one patient, but I rather think the man must have been dead before I saw him. It is a curious case, sir; I will take you to see it—only across the fence there, where you may perceive so many bodies together. Ah! the ball has glanced around the bone without shattering it; you are fortunate in falling into the hands of an old practitioner, or you might have lost this limb."

"Indeed!" said Henry, with a slight uneasiness; "I did not apprehend the injury to be so serious."

"Oh! the hurt is not bad, but you have such a pretty arm for an operation; the pleasure of the thing might have tempted a novice."

"The devil!" cried the captain; "can there be any pleasure in mutilating a fellow creature?"

"Sir," said the surgeon, with gravity, "a scientific amputation is a very pretty operation, and doubtless might tempt a younger man, in the hurry of business, to overlook all the particulars of the case."

Further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the dragoons, slowly marching toward their former halting place, and new applications from the slightly wounded soldiers, who now came riding in, making hasty demands on the skill of the doctor.

The guides took charge of Wharton, and, with a heavy heart, the young man retraced his steps to his father's cottage.

The English had lost in the several charges about one-third of their foot, but the remainder were rallied in the wood; and Dunwoodie, perceiving them to be too strongly posted to assail, had left a strong party with Captain Lawton with orders to watch their motions and to seize every opportunity to harass them before they re-embarked.

Intelligence had reached the major of another party being out, by the way of the Hudson, and his duty required that he should hold himself in readiness to defeat

the intentions of these also. Captain Lawton received his orders, with strong injunctions to make no assault on the foe, unless a favorable chance should offer. The injury received by this officer was in the head, being stunned by a glancing bullet; and parting with a laughing declaration from the major, that if he again forgot himself, they should all think him more materially hurt, each took his own course.

The British were a light party without baggage, that had been sent out to destroy certain stores understood to be collecting for the use of the American army. They now retired through the woods to the heights, and, keeping the route along their summits, in places unassailable by cavalry, commenced a retreat to their boats.

CHAPTER VIII.

"With fire and sword the country round
Was wasted far and wide;
And many a childing mother then,
And new-born infant, died;
But things like these you know must be
At every famous victory."

THE last sounds of the combat died on the ears of the anxious listeners in the cottage, and were succeeded by the stillness of suspense. Frances had continued by herself, striving to exclude the uproar, and vainly endeavoring to summon resolution to meet the dreaded result. The ground where the charge on the foot had taken place was but a short mile from the Locusts, and, in the intervals of the musketry, the cries of the soldiers had even reached the ears of its inhabitants. After witnessing the escape of his son, Mr. Wharton had joined his sister and eldest daughter in their retreat, and the three continued fearfully waiting for news from the field. Unable longer to remain under the painful uncertainty of her situation, Frances soon added herself to the uneasy group, and Cæsar was directed to examine into the state of things without, and report on whose banner victory had alighted. The father now briefly related to his astonished children the circumstance and

manner of their brother's escape. They were yet in the freshness of their surprise when the door opened, and Captain Wharton, attended by a couple of the guides and followed by the black, stood before them.

"Henry—my son, my son," cried the agitated parent, stretching out his arms, yet unable to rise from his seat; "what is it I see? Are you again a captive, and in danger of your life?"

"The better fortune of these rebels has prevailed," said the youth, endeavoring to force a cheerful smile, and taking a hand of each of his distressed sisters. "I strove nobly for my liberty, but the perverse spirit of rebellion has even lighted on their horses. The steed I mounted carried me, greatly against my will, I acknowledge, into the very center of Dunwoodie's men."

"And you were again captured," continued the father, casting a fearful glance on the armed attendants who had entered the room.

"That, sir, you safely say. This Mr. Lawton, who sees so far, had me in custody again immediately."

"Why you no hold 'em in, Massa Harry?" cried Caesar, pettishly.

"That," said Wharton, smiling, "was a thing easier said than done, Mr. Caesar, especially as these gentlemen" (glancing his eyes at the guides) "had seen proper to deprive me of the use of my better arm."

"Wounded!" exclaimed both sisters in a breath.

"A mere scratch, but disabling me at a most critical moment," continued the brother, kindly, and stretching out the injured limb to manifest the truth of his declaration. Caesar threw a look of bitter animosity on the irregular warriors who were thought to have had an agency in the deed, and left the room. A few more words sufficed to explain all that Captain Wharton knew relative to the fortune of the day. The result he thought yet doubtful, for, when he left the ground, the Virginians were retiring from the field of battle.

"They had treed the squirrel," said

one of the sentinels, abruptly, "and didn't quit the ground without leaving a good hound for the chase, when he comes down."

"Ay," added his comrade, dryly, "I'm thinking Captain Lawton will count the noses of what are left before they see their whale boats."

Frances had stood supporting herself by the back of a chair during this dialogue, catching in breathless anxiety every syllable as it was uttered; her color changed rapidly; her limbs shook under her, until, with desperate resolution, she inquired:

"Is any officer hurt on—the—on either side?"

"Yes," answered the man, cavalierly, "these Southern youths are so full of mettle that it's seldom we fight but one or two gets knocked over; one of the wounded, who came up before the troops, told me that Captain Singleton was killed, and Major Dunwoodie—"

Frances heard no more, but fell lifeless in the chair behind her. The attention of her friends soon revived her, when the captain, turning to the man, said, fearfully:

"Surely, Major Dunwoodie is unhurt?"

"Never fear him," added the guide, disregarding the agitation of the family; "they say a man who is born to be hanged will never be drowned; if a bullet could kill the major, he would have been dead long ago. I was going to say that the major was in a sad taking because of the captain's being killed; but had I known how much store the lady set by him, I wouldn't have been so plain-spoken."

Frances now rose quickly from her seat, with cheeks glowing with confusion, and, leaning on her aunt, was about to retire, when Dunwoodie himself appeared. The first emotion of the agitated girl was unalloyed happiness; in the next instant she shrank back appalled from the unusual expression that reigned in his countenance. The sternness of battle yet sat on his brow; his eye was fixed and severe. The smile of affection that used to lighten his dark features on meeting his mistress was supplanted by the lowering look of care;

his whole soul seemed to be absorbed in one engrossing emotion, and he proceeded at once to his object.

"Mr. Wharton," he earnestly began, "in times like these we need not stand on idle ceremony; one of my officers, I am afraid, is hurt mortally, and, presuming on your hospitality, I have brought him to your door."

"I am happy, sir, that you have done so," said Mr. Wharton, at once perceiving the importance of conciliating the American troops; "the necessitous are always welcome, and doubly so in being the friend of Major Dunwoodie."

"Sir, I thank you for myself, and in behalf of him who is unable to render you his thanks," returned the other, hastily; "if you please, we will have him conducted where the surgeon may see and report upon his case, without delay." To this there could be no objection; and Frances felt a chill at her heart, as her lover withdrew, without casting a solitary look on herself.

There is a devotedness in female love that admits of no rivalry. All the tenderness of the heart, all the powers of imagination, are enlisted in behalf of the tyrant passion; and where all is given much is looked for in return. Frances had spent hours of anguish, of torture, on account of Dunwoodie, and he now met her without a smile, and left her without a greeting. The ardor of her feelings was unabated, but the elasticity of her hopes was weakened. As the supporters of the nearly lifeless body of Dunwoodie's friend passed her, in their way to the apartment prepared for his reception, she caught a view of this seeming rival.

His pale and ghastly countenance, sunk-en eye, and difficult breathing gave her a glimpse of death in its most fearful form. Dunwoodie was by his side, and held his hand, giving frequent and stern injunctions to the men to proceed with care, and, in short, manifesting all the solicitude that the most tender friendship could, on such an occasion, inspire. Frances moved lightly before them, and, with an averted face, she held open the door for their passage to the bed; it was only

as the major touched her garments on entering the room that she ventured to raise her mild blue eyes to his face. But the glance was unreturned, and Frances unconsciously sighed as she sought the solitude of her own apartment.

Captain Wharton voluntarily gave a pledge to his keepers not to attempt again escaping, and then proceeded to execute those duties, on behalf of his father, which were thought necessary in a host. On entering the passage for that purpose, he met the operator who had so dexterously dressed his arm, advancing to the room of the wounded officer.

"Ah!" cried the disciple of *Æsculapius*, "I see you are doing well; but stop—have you a pin? No! here, I have one; you must keep the cold air from your hurt, or some of the youngsters will be at work at you yet."

"God forbid," muttered the captain, in an undertone, attentively adjusting the bandages, when Dunwoodie appeared at the door, impatiently crying aloud:

"Hasten, Sitgreaves, hasten! or George Singleton will die from loss of blood!"

"What! Singleton! God forbid! Bless me—is it George—poor little George?" exclaimed the surgeon, as he quickened his pace, with evident concern, and hastened to the side of the bed; "he is alive, though, and while there is life there is hope. This is the first serious case I have had to-day, where the patient was not already dead. Captain Lawton teaches his men to strike with so little discretion—poor George—bless me, it is a musket-bullet."

The youthful sufferer turned his eyes on the man of science, and with a faint smile endeavored to stretch forth his hand. There was an appeal in the look and action that touched the heart of the operator. The surgeon removed his spectacles to wipe an unusual moisture from his eyes, and proceeded carefully to the discharge of his duty. While the previous arrangements were, however, making, he gave vent in some measure to his feelings, by saying:

"When it is only a bullet I have always some hopes; there is a chance that it hits

nothing vital; but, bless me, Captain Lawton's men cut so at random—generally sever the jugular or the carotid artery, or let out the brains, and all are so difficult to remedy—the patient mostly dying before one can get at him. I never had success but once in replacing a man's brains, although I have tried three this very day. It is easy to tell where Lawton's troops charge in a battle, they cut so at random."

The group around the bed of Captain Singleton were too much accustomed to the manner of their surgeon to regard or to reply to his soliloquy; but they quietly awaited the moment when he was to commence his examination. This now took place, and Dunwoodie stood looking the operator in the face, with an expression that seemed to read his soul. The patient shrank from the application of the probe, and a smile stole over the features of the surgeon, as he muttered:

"There has been nothing before it in that quarter." He now applied himself in earnest to his work, took off his spectacles and threw aside his wig. All this time Dunwoodie stood in feverish silence, holding one of the hands of the sufferer in both his own, watching the countenance of Dr. Sitgreaves. At length Singleton gave a slight groan, and the surgeon rose with alacrity, and said aloud:

"Ah! there is some pleasure in following a bullet; it may be said to meander through the human body, injuring nothing vital; but as for Captain Lawton's men——"

"Speak," interrupted Dunwoodie; "is there hope?—can you find the ball?"

"It's no difficult matter to find that which one has in his hand, Major Dunwoodie," replied the surgeon coolly, preparing his dressings; "it took what that liberal fellow, Captain Lawton, calls a circumdendibus, a route never taken by the swords of his men, notwithstanding the multiplied pains I have been at to teach him how to cut scientifically. Now, I saw a horse this day with his head half severed from his body."

"That," said Dunwoodie, as the blood rushed to his cheeks again, and his dark

eyes sparkled with the rays of hope, "was some of my handiwork; I killed that horse myself."

"You!" exclaimed the surgeon, dropping his dressing in surprise, "you! but you knew it was a horse!"

"I had such suspicions, I own," said the major, smiling, and holding a beverage to the lips of his friend.

"Such blows alighting on the human frame are fatal," continued the doctor pursuing his business; "they set at naught the benefits which flow from the lights of science, they are useless in battle, for disabling your foe is all that is required. I have sat, Major Dunwoodie, many a cold hour, while Captain Lawton has been engaged, and after all my expectation, not a single case worth recording has occurred—all scratches or death-wounds; ah! the saber is a sad weapon in unskillful hands! Yes, Major Dunwoodie, many are the hours I have thrown away in endeavoring to impress this truth on Captain John Lawton."

The impatient major pointed silently to his friend, and the surgeon quickened his movements.

"Ah! poor George, it is a narrow chance; but—" he was interrupted by a messenger requiring the presence of the commanding officer in the field. Dunwoodie pressed the hand of his friend, and beckoned the doctor to follow him, as he withdrew.

"What think you?" he whispered, on reaching the passage; "will he live?"

"He will."

"Thank God!" cried the youth, hastening below.

Dunwoodie for a moment joined the family, who were now collecting in the ordinary parlor. His face was no longer wanting in smiles, and his salutations, though hasty, were cordial. He took no notice of the escape and recapture of Henry Wharton, but seemed to think the young man had continued where he had left him before the encounter. On the ground they had not met. The English officer withdrew in haughty silence to a window, leaving the major uninterrupted to make his communications.

The excitement produced by the events of the day in the youthful feelings of the sisters had been succeeded by a languor that kept them both silent, and Dunwoodie held his discourse with Miss Peyton.

"Is there any hope, my cousin, that your friend can survive his wound?" said the lady advancing toward her kinsman, with a smile of benevolent regard.

"Everything, my dear madam, everything," answered the soldier, cheerfully. "Sitgreaves says he will live, and he has never deceived me."

"Your pleasure is not much greater than my own at this intelligence. One so dear to Major Dunwoodie cannot fail to excite an interest in the bosom of his friends."

"Say one so deservedly, dear madam," returned the major with warmth; "he is the beneficent spirit of the corps, equally beloved by us all; so mild, so equal, so just, so generous, with the meekness of a lamb and the fondness of a dove—it is only in the hour of battle that Singleton is a lion."

"You speak of him as if he were your mistress, Major Dunwoodie," observed the smiling spinster, glancing her eye at her niece, who sat pale and listening, in a corner of the room.

"I love him as one," cried the excited youth; "but he requires care and nursing; all now depends on the attention he receives."

"Trust me, sir, he will want for nothing under this roof."

"Pardon me, dear madam; you are all that is benevolent, but Singleton requires a care which many men would feel to be irksome. It is at moments like these and in sufferings like this, that the soldier most finds the want of female tenderness." As he spoke he turned his eyes on Frances with an expression that again thrilled to the heart of his mistress; she rose from her seat with burning cheeks and said:

"All the attention that can with propriety be given to a stranger will be cheerfully bestowed on your friend."

"Ah!" cried the major, shaking his head, "that cold word propriety will kill

him; he must be fostered, cherished, soothed."

"These are offices for a sister or a wife."

"A sister!" repeated the soldier, the blood rushing to his own face tumultuously; "a sister! he has a sister; and one that might be here with to-morrow's sun." He paused, mused in silence, glanced his eyes uneasily at Frances, and muttered in an undertone—"Singleton requires it, and it must be done."

The ladies had watched his varying countenance in some surprise, and Miss Peyton now observed that:

"If there were a sister of Captain Singleton near them her presence would be gladly requested both by herself and nieces."

"It must be, madam; it cannot well be otherwise," replied Dunwoodie, with a hesitation that but ill agreed with his former declarations; "she shall be sent for express this very night." And then, as if willing to change the subject, he approached Captain Wharton, and continued mildly:

"Henry Wharton, to me honor is dearer than life, but in your hands I know it can safely be confided; remain here unwatched until we leave the country, which will not be for some days."

The distance in the manner of the English officer vanquished, and, taking the offered hand of the other, he replied, with warmth: "Your generous confidence, Peyton, will not be abused, even though the gibbet on which your Washington hung André be ready for my own execution."

"Henry—Henry Wharton," said Dunwoodie, reproachfully, "you little know the man who leads our armies, or you would have spared him that reproach; but duty calls me without. I leave you where I could wish to stay myself, and where you cannot be wholly unhappy."

In passing Frances she received another of those smiling looks of affection she so much prized, and for a season the impression made by his appearance after the battle was forgotten.

Among the veterans that had been im-



The horse of Lawton struck the prostrate peddler, and both steed and rider came violently to the earth. As quick as thought Birch was on his feet again.—*The Spy*.

pelled by the times to abandon the quiet of age for the service of their country, was Colonel Singleton. He was a native of Georgia, and had been for the earlier years of his life a soldier by profession. When the struggle for liberty commenced he offered his services to his country, and from respect to his character they had been accepted. His years and health had, however, prevented his discharging the active duties of the field, and he had been kept in command of different posts of trust, where his country might receive the benefits of his vigilance and fidelity without inconvenience to himself. For the last year he had been intrusted with the passes into the Highlands, and was now quartered, with his daughter, but a short day's march above the valley where Dunwoodie had met the enemy. His only other child was the wounded officer we have mentioned. Thither, then, the major prepared to dispatch a messenger with the unhappy news of the captain's situation, and charged with such an invitation from the ladies as he did not doubt would speedily bring the sister to the couch of the brother.

This duty performed, though with an unwillingness that could only make his former anxiety more perplexing, Dunwoodie proceeded to the field where his troops had halted. The remnant of the English were already to be seen, over the tops of the trees, marching along the heights toward their boats, in compact order and with great watchfulness. The detachment of the dragoons under Lawton were a short distance on their flank, eagerly awaiting a favorable moment to strike a blow. In this manner both parties were soon lost to view.

A short distance above the Locusts was a small hamlet, where several roads intersected each other, and from which, consequently, access to the surrounding country was easy. It was a favorite halting-place of the horse, and frequently held by the light parties of the American army during their excursions below. Dunwoodie had been the first to discover its advantages, and as it was necessary for him to remain in the county until further orders from

above, it cannot be supposed he overlooked them now. To this place the troops were directed to retire, carrying with them their wounded; parties were already employed in the sad duty of interring the dead. In making these arrangements, a new object of embarrassment presented itself to our young soldier. In moving through the field, he was struck with the appearance of Colonel Wellmere, seated by himself, brooding over his misfortunes, uninterrupted by anything but the passing civilities of the American officers. His anxiety on behalf of Singleton had hitherto banished the recollection of his captive from the mind of Dunwoodie, and he now approached him with apologies for his neglect. The Englishman received his courtesies with coolness, and complained of being injured by what he affected to think was the accidental stumbling of his horse. Dunwoodie, who had seen one of his own men ride him down, and that with very little ceremony, slightly smiled, as he offered him surgical assistance. This could only be procured at the cottage, and thither they both proceeded.

"Colonel Wellmere!" cried young Wharton, in astonishment, as they entered, "has the fortune of war been thus cruel to you also?—but you are welcome to the house of my father, although I could wish the introduction to have taken place under more happy circumstances."

Mr. Wharton received this new guest with the guarded caution that distinguished his manner, and Dunwoodie left the room to seek the bedside of his friend. Everything here looked propitious, and he acquainted the surgeon that another patient awaited his skill in the room below. The sound of the word was enough to set the doctor in motion, and, seizing his implements of office, he went in quest of this new applicant. At the door of the parlor he was met by the ladies, who were retiring. Miss Peyton detained him for a moment, to inquire into the welfare of Captain Singleton. Frances smiled with something of her natural archness of manner, as she contemplated the grotesque appearance of the bald-headed practi-

tioner; but Sarah was too much agitated with the surprise of the unexpected interview with the British colonel, to observe him. It has already been intimated that Colonel Wellmore was an old acquaintance of the family. Sarah had been so long absent from the city that she had, in some measure, been banished from the remembrance of the gentleman; but the recollections of Sarah were more vivid. There is a period in the life of every woman when she may be said to be predisposed to love; it is at the happy age when infancy is lost in opening maturity—when the guileless heart beats with those anticipations of the life which the truth can never realize—and when the imagination forms images of perfection that are copied after its own unsullied visions. At this happy age Sarah left the city, and she had brought with her a picture of futurity, faintly impressed, it is true, but which gained durability from her solitude, and in which Wellmere had been placed in the foreground. The surprise of the meeting had in some measure overpowered her, and after receiving the salutations of the colonel, she had risen, in compliance with a signal from her observant aunt, to withdraw.

"Then, sir," observed Miss Peyton, after listening to the surgeon's account of his young patient, "we may be flattered with the expectation that he will recover."

"'Tis certain, madam," returned the doctor, endeavoring, out of respect to the ladies, to replace his wig; "'tis certain, with care and good nursing."

"In those we shall not be wanting," said the spinster mildly. "Everything we have he can command, and Major Dunwoodie has dispatched an express for his sister."

"His sister!" echoed the practitioner, with a look of particular meaning; "if the major has sent for her, she will come."

"Her brother's danger would induce her, one would imagine."

"No doubt, madam," continued the doctor, laconically, bowing low, and giving room to the ladies to pass. The words and the manner were not lost on the younger sister, in whose presence the

name of Dunwoodie was never mentioned unheeded.

"Sir," cried Dr. Sitgreaves, on entering the parlor, addressing himself to the only coat of scarlet in the room, "I am advised you are in want of my aid. God send 'tis not Captain Lawton with whom you came in contact, in which case I may be too late."

"There must be some mistake, sir," said Wellmere, haughtily; "it was a surgeon that Major Dunwoodie was to send me, and not an old woman."

"'Tis Dr. Sitgreaves," said Henry Wharton, quickly, though with difficulty suppressing a laugh; "the multitude of his engagements, to-day, has prevented his usual attention to his attire."

"Your pardon, sir," added Wellmere, very ungraciously, proceeding to lay aside his coat, and exhibit what he called a wounded arm.

"If, sir," said the surgeon, dryly, "the degrees of Edinburgh—walking your London hospitals—amputating some hundreds of limbs—operating on the human frame in every shape that is warranted by the lights of science, a clear conscience, and the commission of the Continental Congress, can make a surgeon, I am one."

"Your pardon, sir," repeated the colonel stiffly, "Captain Wharton has accounted for my error."

"For which I thank Captain Wharton," said the surgeon, proceeding coolly to arrange his amputating instruments, with a formality that made the colonel's blood run cold. "Where are you hurt, sir? What! is it then this scratch in your shoulder? In what manner might you have received this wound, sir?"

"From the sword of a rebel dragoon," said the colonel, with emphasis.

"Never! Even the gentle George Singleton would not have breathed on you so harmlessly." He took a piece of sticking-plaster from his pocket and applied it to the part. "There, sir; that will answer your purpose, and I am certain it is all that is required of me."

"What do you take to be my purpose, then, sir?"

"To report yourself wounded in your

dispatches," replied the doctor with great steadiness; "and you may say, that an old woman dressed your hurts—for, if one did not, one easily might."

"Very extraordinary language," muttered the Englishman.

Here Captain Wharton interfered; and, by explaining the mistake of Colonel Wellmere to proceed from his irritated mind and pain of body, he in part succeeded in mollifying the insulted practitioner, who consented to look further into the hurts of the other. They were chiefly bruises from his fall, to which Sitgreaves made some hasty applications and withdrew.

The horse, having taken their required refreshment, prepared to fall back to their intended position, and it became incumbent on Dunwoodie to arrange the disposal of his prisoners. Sitgreaves he determined to leave in the cottage of Mr. Wharton, in attendance on Captain Singleton. Henry came to him with a request that Colonel Wellmere might also be left behind, under his parole, until the troops marched higher into the country. To this the major cheerfully assented; and as all the rest of the prisoners were of the vulgar herd, they were speedily collected, and, under the care of a strong guard, ordered to the interior. The dragoons soon after marched; and the guides, separating in small parties, accompanied by patrols from the horse, spread themselves across the country, in such a manner as to make a chain of sentinels from the waters of the Sound to those of the Hudson.*

Dunwoodie had lingered in front of the cottage, after he paid his parting compliments, with an unwillingness to return that he thought proceeded from his solicitude for his wounded friends. The heart which has not become callous soon sickens with the glory that has been purchased with a waste of human life. Peyton Dunwoodie, left to himself, and no longer excited by the visions which youthful ardor had kept before him throughout the day, began to feel there were other ties than those which bound the soldier within the rigid rules of honor. He did not waver in

his duty, yet he felt how strong was the temptation. His blood had ceased to flow with the impulse created by the battle. The stern expression of his eye gradually gave place to a look of softness; and his reflections on the victory brought with them no satisfaction that compensated for the sacrifices by which it had been purchased. While turning his last lingering gaze on the Locusts, he remembered only that it contained all that he most valued. The friend of his youth was a prisoner, under circumstances that endangered both life and honor. The gentle companion of his toils, who could throw around the rude enjoyments of a soldier the graceful mildness of peace, lay a bleeding victim to his success. The image of the maid who had held, during the day, a disputed sovereignty in his bosom, again rose to his view with a loveliness that banished her rival, glory, from his mind.

The last lagging trooper of the corps had already disappeared behind the northern hill, and the major unwillingly turned his horse in the same direction. Frances, impelled by a restless inquietude, now timidly ventured on the piazza of the cottage. The day had been mild and clear, and the sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky. The tumult which so lately disturbed the valley was succeeded by the stillness of death, and the fair scene before her looked as if it had never been marred by the passions of men. One solitary cloud, the collected smoke of the contest, hung over the field; and this was gradually dispersing, leaving no vestige of the conflict above the peaceful graves of its victims. All the conflicting feelings, all the tumultuous circumstances of the eventful day, appeared like the deceptions of a troubled vision. Frances turned, and caught a glimpse of the retreating figure of him who had been so conspicuous an actor in the scene, and the illusion vanished. She recognized her lover, and, with the truth, came other recollections that drove her to the room, with a heart as sad as that which Dunwoodie himself bore from the valley.

* The scene of this tale is between these two waters, which are but a few miles from each other.

CHAPTER IX.

A moment gazed adown the dale,
 A moment snuffed the tainted gale,
 A moment listened to the cry,
 That thickened as the chase drew nigh;
 Then, as the headmost foe appeared,
 With one brave bound the copse he cleared,
 And stretching forward free and far,
 Sought the wild heaths of Uam Var.

—WALTER SCOTT.

THE party under Captain Lawton had watched the retiring foe at his boats with the most unremitting vigilance, without finding any fit opening for a charge. The experienced successor of Colonel Wellmere knew too well the power of his enemy to leave the uneven surface of the heights, until compelled to descend to the level of the water. Before he attempted this hazardous movement, he threw his men into a compact square, with its outer edges bristling with bayonets. In this position, the impatient trooper well understood that brave men could never be assailed by cavalry with success, and he was reluctantly obliged to hover near them, without seeing any opportunity of stopping their slow but steady march to the beach. A small schooner, which had been their convoy from the city, lay with her guns bearing on the place of embarkation. Against this combination of force and discipline, Lawton had sufficient prudence to see it would be folly to contend, and the English were suffered to embark without molestation. The dragoons lingered on the shore till the last moment, and then they reluctantly commenced their own retreat back to the main body of the corps.

The gathering mists of the evening had begun to darken the valley, as the detachment of Lawton made its reappearance at its southern extremity. The march of the troops was slow, and their line extended, for the benefit of ease. In the front rode the captain, side by side with his senior subaltern, apparently engaged in close conference, while the rear was brought up by a young cornet, humming an air, and thinking of the sweets of a straw bed after the fatigues of a hard day's duty.

"Then it struck you, too?" said the captain. "The instant I placed my eyes on her I remembered the face; it is one not easily forgotten. By my faith, Tom, the girl does no discredit to the major's taste."

"She would do honor to the corps," replied the lieutenant, with some warmth; "those blue eyes might easily win a man to gentler employments than this trade of ours. In sober truth, I can easily imagine such a girl might tempt even me to quit the broadsword and saddle for a darning-needle and pillion."

"Mutiny, sir, mutiny," cried the other, laughing; "what, you, Tom Mason, dare to rival the gay, admired, and withal the rich, Major Dunwoodie in his love! You, a lieutenant in cavalry, with but one horse, and he none of the best! whose captain is as tough as a pepperidge log, and has as many lives as a cat."

"Faith," said the subaltern, smiling in his turn, "the log may yet be split, and Grimalkin lose his lives, if you often charge as madly as you did this morning. What think you of many raps from such a beetle as laid you on your back to-day?"

"Ah! don't mention it, my good Tom; the thought makes my head ache," replied the other, shrugging up his shoulders; "it is what I call forestalling night."

"The night of death?"

"No, sir, the night that follows day. I saw myriads of stars, things which should hide their faces in the presence of the lordly sun. I do think nothing but this thick cap saved me from your comfort a little longer, maugre the cat's lives."

"I have much reason to be obliged to the cap," said Mason, dryly; "that or the skull must have had a reasonable portion of thickness, I admit."

"Come, come, Tom, you are a licensed joker, so I'll not feign anger with you," returned the captain, good-humoredly; "but Singleton's lieutenant, I am fearful, will fare better than yourself for this day's service."

"I believe both of us will be spared the pain of receiving promotion purchased by

the death of a comrade and friend," observed Mason, kindly; "it was reported that Sitgreaves said he would live."

"From my soul, I hope so," exclaimed Lawton; "for a beardless face, that boy carries the stoutest heart I have ever met with. It surprises me, however, that, as we both fell at the same instant, the men behaved so well."

"For the compliment, I might thank you," cried the lieutenant, with a laugh; "but modesty forbids; I did my best to stop them, but without success."

"Stop them," roared the captain; "would you stop men in the middle of a charge?"

"I thought they were going the wrong way," answered the subaltern.

"Ah! our fall drove them to the right about?"

"It was either your fall, or apprehensions of their own; until the major rallied us we were in admirable disorder."

"Dunwoodie! the major was on the crupper of the Dutchman."

"Ah! but he managed to get off the crupper of the Dutchman. He came in at half-speed, with the other two troops, and riding between us and the enemy, with that imperative way he has when roused, brought us in line in the twinkling of an eye. Then it was," added the lieutenant, with animation, "that we sent John Bull to the bushes. Oh! it was a sweet charge—heads and tails, until we were upon them."

"The devil! What a sight I missed!"

"You slept through it all."

"Yes," returned the other, with a sigh; "it was all lost to me and poor George Singleton. But, Tom, what will George's sister say to this fair-haired maiden in yonder white building?"

"Hang herself in her garters," said the subaltern. "I owe a proper respect to my superiors, but two such angels are more than justly falls to the share of one man, unless he be a Turk or a Hindoo."

"Yes, yes," said the captain, quickly; "the major is ever preaching morality to the youngsters, but he is a sly fellow in the main. Do you observe how fond he is

of the cross roads above this valley? Now, if I were to halt the troops twice in the same place, you would all swear there was a petticoat in the wind."

"You are well known to the corps."

"Well, Tom, a slanderous propensity is incurable—but," stretching forward his body in the direction he was gazing, as if to aid him in distinguishing objects through the darkness, "what animal is moving through the field on our right?"

"'Tis a man," said Mason, looking intently at the suspicious object.

"By his hump 'tis a dromedary!" added the captain, eying it keenly. Wheeling his horse suddenly from the highway, he exclaimed—"Harvey Birch!—take him, dead or alive!"

Mason and a few of the leading dragoons only understood the sudden cry, but it was heard throughout the line. A dozen of the men, with the lieutenant at their head, followed the impetuous Lawton, and their speed threatened the pursued with a sudden termination of the race.

Birch prudently kept his position on the rock, where he had been seen by the passing glance of Henry Wharton, until evening had begun to shroud the surrounding objects in darkness. From this height he had seen all the events of the day as they occurred. He had watched, with a beating heart, the departure of the troops under Dunwoodie, and with difficulty had curbed his impatience until the obscurity of night should render his moving free from danger. He had not, however, completed a fourth of his way to his own residence, when his quick ear distinguished the tread of approaching horse. Trusting to the increasing darkness, he determined to persevere. By crouching and moving quickly along the surface of the ground, he hoped yet to escape unseen. Captain Lawton was too much engrossed with the foregoing conversation to suffer his eyes to indulge in their usual wandering; and the peddler, perceiving by the voices that the enemy he most feared had passed, yielded to his impatience, and stood erect, in order to make greater progress.

The moment his body arose above the shadow of the ground it was seen, and

the chase commenced. For a single instant Birch was helpless, his blood curdling in his veins at the imminence of his danger, and his legs refusing their natural and necessary office. But it was only for a moment. Casting his pack where he stood, and instinctively tightening the belt he wore, the peddler betook himself to flight. He knew that by bringing himself in a line with his pursuers and the wood his form would be lost to sight. This he soon effected, and he was straining every nerve to gain the wood itself, when several horsemen rode by him but a short distance on his left, and cut him off from this place of refuge. The peddler threw himself on the ground as they came near him, and was passed unseen. But delay now became too dangerous for him to remain in that position. He accordingly arose, and still keeping in the shadow of the wood, along the skirts of which he heard voices crying to each other to be watchful, he ran with incredible speed in a parallel line, but in an opposite direction, to the march of the dragoons.

The confusion of the chase had been heard by the whole of the men, though none distinctly understood the order of Lawton but those who followed. The remainder were lost in doubt as to the duty that was required of them; and the aforesaid cornet was making eager inquiries of the trooper near him on the subject, when a man, a short distance in the rear, crossed the road at a single bound. At the same instant the stentorian voice of Lawton rang through the valley, shouting:

"Harvey Birch—take him, dead or alive!"

Fifty pistols lighted the scene, and the bullets whistled in every direction round the head of the devoted peddler. A feeling of despair seized his heart, and in the bitterness of that moment he exclaimed:

"Hunted like a beast of the forest!"

He felt life and its accompaniments to be a burden, and was about to yield himself to his enemies. Nature, however, prevailed. If taken, there was great reason to apprehend that he would not be

honored with the forms of a trial, but that most probably the morning sun would witness his ignominious execution; for he had already been condemned to death, and had already escaped the fate by stratagem. These considerations, with the approaching footsteps of his pursuers, roused him to new exertions. He again fled before them. A fragment of a wall, that had withstood the ravages made by war in the adjoining fences of wood, fortunately crossed his path. He hardly had time to throw his exhausted limbs over this barrier before twenty of his enemies reached its opposite side. Their horses refused to take the leap in the dark, and amid the confusion of the rearing chargers, and the execrations of their riders, Birch was enabled to gain a sight of the base of the hill, on whose summit was a place of perfect security. The heart of the peddler now beat high with hope, when the voice of Captain Lawton again rang in his ears, shouting to his men to make room. The order was obeyed, and the fearless trooper rode at the wall at the top of his horse's speed, plunged the rowels in his charger, and flew over the obstacle in safety. The triumphant hurrahs of the men, and the thundering tread of the horse, too plainly assured the peddler of the emergency of his danger. He was nearly exhausted, and his fate no longer seemed doubtful.

"Stop or die!" was uttered above his head, and in fearful proximity to his ears.

Harvey stole a glance over his shoulder, and saw within a bound of him the man he most dreaded. By the light of the stars he beheld the uplifted arm and the threatening saber. Fear, exhaustion and despair seized his heart, and the intended victim fell at the feet of the dragoon. The horse of Lawton struck the prostrate peddler, and both steed and rider came violently to earth.

As quick as thought Birch was on his feet again, with the sword of the discomfited dragoon in his hand. Vengeance seems but too natural to human passions. There are few who have not felt the seductive pleasure of making our injuries recoil on their authors; and yet there are

some who know how much sweeter it is to return good for evil.

All the wrong of the peddler shone on his brain with a dazzling brightness. For a moment the demon within him prevailed, and Birch brandished the powerful weapon in the air; in the next it fell harmless on the reviving but helpless trooper. The peddler vanished up the side of the friendly rock.

"Help Captain Lawton, there!" cried Mason, as he rode up, followed by a dozen of his men, "and some of you dismount with me, and search these rocks; the villain lies here concealed."

"Hold!" roared the discomfited captain, raising himself with difficulty on his feet; "if one of you dismount, he dies. Tom, my good fellow, you will help me to straddle Roanoke again."

The astonished subaltern complied in silence, while the wondering dragoons remained as fixed in their saddles as if they composed part of the animals they rode.

"You are much hurt, I fear," said Mason, with something of condolence in his manner, as they re-entered the highway, and, biting off the end of a cigar for the want of a better quality of tobacco.

"Something so, I do believe," cried the captain, catching his breath, and speaking with difficulty; "I wish our bone-setter was at hand to examine into the state of my ribs."

"Sitgreaves is left in attendance on Captain Singleton, at the house of Mr. Wharton."

"Then there I halt for the night, Tom. These rude times must abridge ceremony; besides, you may remember the old gentleman professed a kinsman's regard for the corps. I can never think of passing so good a friend without a halt."

"And I will lead the troops on to the Four Corners; if we all halt there we shall breed a famine in the land."

"A condition I never desire to be placed in. The idea of that graceful spinster's cakes is no bad solace for twenty-four hours in the hospital."

"Oh! you won't die if you can think of eating," said Mason with a laugh.

"I should surely die if I could not," observed the captain, gravely.

"Captain Lawton," said the orderly of his troop, riding to the side of his commanding officer, "we are now passing the house of the peddler spy; is it your pleasure that we burn it?"

"No!" roared the captain, in a voice that startled the disappointed sergeant; "are you an incendiary? would you burn a house in cold blood? Let but a spark approach, and the hand that carries it will never light another."

"Zounds!" muttered the sleepy cornet in the rear, as he was nodding on his horse, "there is life in the captain, notwithstanding his tumble."

Lawton and Mason rode on in silence, the latter ruminating on the wonderful change produced in his commander by his fall, when they arrived opposite the gate before the residence of Mr. Wharton. The troop continued its march; but the captain and his lieutenant dismounted, and, followed by the servant of the former, they proceeded slowly to the door of the cottage.

Colonel Wellmere had already sought a retreat in his room; Mr. Wharton and his son were closeted by themselves; and the ladies were administering the refreshments of the tea-table to the surgeon of the dragoons, who had seen one of his patients in his bed and the other happily enjoying the comforts of a sweet sleep. A few natural inquiries from Miss Peyton had opened the soul of the doctor, who knew every individual of her extensive family connection in Virginia, and who even thought it possible that he had seen the lady herself. The amiable spinster smiled as she felt it to be improbable that she should ever have met her new acquaintance before, and not remember his singularities. It, however, greatly relieved the embarrassment of their situation, and something like a discourse was maintained between them; the nieces were only listeners, nor could the aunt be said to be much more.

"As I was observing, Miss Peyton, it was merely the noxious vapors of the lowlands that rendered the plantation of your brother an unfit residence for man; but quadrupeds were——"

"Bless me, what's that?" said Miss Peyton, turning pale at the report of the pistols fired at Birch.

"It sounds prodigiously like the concussion on the atmosphere made by the explosion of firearms," said the surgeon, sipping his tea with great indifference. "I should imagine it to be the troop of Captain Lawton returning, did I not know the captain never uses the pistol, and that he dreadfully abuses the saber."

"Merciful providence!" exclaimed the agitated maiden; "he would not injure one with it, certainly."

"Injure!" repeated the other, quickly; "it is certain death, madam—the most random blows imaginable; all that I can say to him will have no effect."

"But Captain Lawton is the officer we saw this morning, and is surely your friend," said Frances, hastily, observing her aunt to be seriously alarmed.

"I find no fault with his want of friendship; the man is well enough, if he would learn to cut scientifically. All trades, madam, ought to be allowed to live; but what is to become of a surgeon, if his patients are dead before he sees them?"

The doctor continued haranguing on the probability and improbability of its being the returning troop, until a loud knock at the door gave new alarm to the ladies. Instinctively laying his hand on a small saw, that had been his companion for the whole day, in the vain expectation of an amputation, the surgeon coolly assuring the ladies that he would stand between them and danger, proceeded in person to answer the summons.

"Captain Lawton!" exclaimed the surgeon, as he beheld the trooper leaning on the arm of his subaltern, and with difficulty crossing the threshold.

"Ah! my dear bone-setter, is it you? You are here very fortunately to inspect my carcass; but do lay aside that rascally saw!"

A few words from Mason explained the nature and manner of his captain's hurts, and Miss Peyton cheerfully accorded the required accommodations. While the room intended for the trooper was getting ready, and the doctor was giving certain

portentous orders, the captain was invited to rest himself in the parlor. On the table was a dish of more substantial food than ordinarily adorned the afternoon's repast, and it soon caught the attention of the dragoons. Miss Peyton, recollecting that they had probably made their only meal that day at her own table, kindly invited them to close it with another. The offer required no pressing, and in a few minutes the two were comfortably seated, and engaged in an employment that was only interrupted by an occasional wry face from the captain, who moved his body in evident pain. These interruptions, however, interfered but little with the principal business in hand; and the captain had got happily through with this important duty, before the surgeon returned to announce all things ready for his accommodation, in the room above stairs.

"Eating!" cried the astonished physician; "Captain Lawton, do you wish to die?"

"I have no particular ambition in that way," said the trooper, rising, and bowing good-night to the ladies, "and, therefore, have been providing the materials necessary to preserve life."

The surgeon muttered his dissatisfaction, while he followed Mason and the captain from the apartment.

Every house in America had, at that day, what was emphatically called its best room, and this had been allotted, by the unseen influence of Sarah, to Colonel Wellmere. The down counterpane, which a clear frosty night would render extremely grateful over bruised limbs, decked the English officer's bed. A massive silver tankard, richly embossed with the Wharton arms, held the beverage he was to drink during the night; while beautiful vessels of china performed the same office for the two American captains. Sarah was certainly unconscious of the silent preference she had been giving to the English officer; and it is equally certain that, but for his hurts, bed, tankard, and everything but the beverage, would have been matters of indifference to Captain Lawton, half of whose nights were spent in his clothes,

and not a few of them in the saddle. After taking possession, however, of a small but very comfortable room, Dr. Sitgreaves proceeded to inquire into the state of his injuries. He had begun to pass his hand over the body of his patient when the latter cried, impatiently:

"Sitgreaves, do me the favor to lay that rascally saw aside; or I shall have recourse to my saber in self-defense; the sight of it makes my blood cold."

"Captain Lawton, for a man who has so often exposed life and limb, you are unaccountably afraid of a very useful instrument."

"Heaven keep me from its use," said the trooper, with a shrug.

"You would not despise the lights of science, nor refuse surgical aid, because this saw might be necessary?"

"I would."

"You would!"

"Yes; you shall never joint me like a quarter of beef while I have life to defend myself," cried the resolute dragoon. "But I grow sleepy; are any of my ribs broken?"

"No."

"Any of my bones?"

"No."

"Tom, I'll thank you for that pitcher."

As he ended his draught, he very deliberately turned his back on his companions, and good-naturedly cried—"Good-night, Mason; good-night, Galen."

Captain Lawton entertained a profound respect for the surgical abilities of his comrade, but he was very skeptical on the subject of administering internally for the ailments of the human frame. With a full stomach, a stout heart, and a clear conscience, he often maintained that a man might bid defiance to the world and its vicissitudes. Nature provided him with the second, and, to say the truth, he strove manfully himself to keep up the other two requisites in his creed. It was a favorite maxim with him that the last thing death assailed was the eyes, and the next to the last, the jaws. This he interpreted to be a clear expression of the intention of Nature, that every man might regulate, by his own volition, whatever was to be ad-

mitted into the sanctuary of his mouth; consequently, if the guest proved unpalatable, he had no one to blame but himself. The surgeon, who was well acquainted with these views of his patient, beheld him, as he cavalierly turned his back on Mason and himself, with a commiserating contempt, replaced in their leathern repository the phials he had exhibited, with a species of care that was allied to veneration, gave the saw, as he concluded, a whirl of triumph, and departed, without condescending to notice the compliment of the trooper. Mason, finding by the breathing of the captain that his own good-night would be unheard, hastened to pay his respects to the ladies, after which he mounted, and followed the troop at the top of his horse's speed.

CHAPTER X.

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires,
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

—Gray.

THE possessions of Mr. Wharton extended to some distance on each side of the house in which he dwelt, and most of his land was unoccupied. A few scattered dwellings were to be seen in different parts of his domains, but they were fast falling to decay, and were untenanted. The proximity of the country to the contending armies had nearly banished the pursuits of agriculture from the land. It was useless for the husbandman to devote his time, and the labor of his hands, to obtain overflowing garners, that the first foraging party would empty. None tilled the earth with any other view than to provide the scanty means of subsistence, except those who were placed so near to one of the adverse parties as to be safe from the inroads of the light troops of the other. To these the war offered a golden harvest, more especially to such as enjoyed the benefits of an access to the royal army. Mr. Wharton did not require the use of his lands for the purpose of subsistence; and

he willingly adopted the guarded practice of the day, limiting his attention to such articles as were soon to be consumed within his own walls, or could be easily secreted from the prying eyes of the foragers. In consequence, the ground on which the action was fought had not a single inhabited building, besides the one belonging to the father of Harvey Birch. This house stood between the place where the cavalry had met and that where the charge had been made on the party of Wellmere.

To Katy Haynes it had been a day fruitful of incidents. The prudent housekeeper had kept her political feelings in a state of rigid neutrality; her own friends had espoused the cause of the country, but the maiden herself never lost sight of that important moment when, like females of more illustrious hopes, she might be required to sacrifice her love of country on the altar of domestic harmony. And yet, notwithstanding all her sagacity, there were moments when the good woman had grievous doubts into which scale she ought to throw the weight of her eloquence, in order to be certain of supporting the cause favored by the peddler. There was so much that was equivocal in his movements and manner that often when, in the privacy of their household, she was about to utter a philippic on Washington and his followers, discretion sealed her mouth, and distrust beset her mind. In short, the whole conduct of the mysterious being she studied was of a character to distract the opinions of one who took a more enlarged view of men and life than came within the competency of his housekeeper.

The battle of the Plains had taught the cautious Washington the advantages his enemy possessed in organization, arms and discipline. These were difficulties to be mastered by his own vigilance and care. Drawing off his troops to the heights, in the northern part of the county, he had bidden defiance to the attacks of the royal army, and Sir William Howe fell back to the enjoyment of his barren conquest—a deserted city. Never afterward did the opposing armies make

the trial of strength within the limits of Westchester; yet hardly a day passed that the partisans did not make their inroads; or a sunrise, that the inhabitants were spared the relation of excesses which the preceding darkness had served to conceal. Most of the movements of the peddler were made at the hours which others allotted to repose. The evening sun would frequently leave him at one extremity of the county, and the morning find him at the other. His pack was his never-failing companion, and there were those who closely studied him, in his moments of traffic, and thought his only purpose was the accumulation of gold. He would be often seen near the Highlands, with a body bending under its load; and again near the Harlem River, traveling with lighter steps, with his face toward the setting sun. But these glances at him were uncertain and fleeting. The intermediate time no eye could penetrate. For months he disappeared, and no traces of his course were ever known.

Strong parties held the heights of Harlem, and the northern end of Manhattan Island was bristling with the bayonets of the English sentinels, yet the peddler glided among them unnoticed and uninjured. His approaches to the American lines were also frequent; but generally so conducted as to baffle pursuit. Many a sentinel, placed in the gorges of the mountains, spoke of a strange figure that had been seen gliding by them in the mists of the evening. These stories reached the ears of the officers, and, as we have related, in two instances the trader had fallen into the hands of the Americans. The first time he had escaped from Lawton, shortly after his arrest; but the second he was condemned to die. On the morning of his intended execution, the cage was opened, but the bird had flown. This extraordinary escape had been made from the custody of a favorite officer of Washington, and sentinels who had been thought worthy to guard the person of the commander-in-chief. Bribery and treason could not be imputed to men so well esteemed, and the opinion gained ground among the common soldiery that

the peddler had dealings with the dark one. Katy, however, always repelled this opinion, with indignation; for within the recesses of her own bosom the house-keeper, in ruminating on the events, concluded that the evil spirits did not pay in gold. Nor, continued the wary spinster in her cogitations, does Washington; paper and promises were all that the leader of the American troops could dispense to his servants. After the alliance with France, when silver became more abundant in the country, although the scrutinizing eyes of Katy never let any opportunity of examining into the deer-skin purse pass unimproved, she was never able to detect the image of Louis intruding into the presence of the well-known countenance of George III. In short, the secret hoard of Harvey sufficiently showed in its contents that all its contributions had been received from the British.

The house of Birch had been watched at different times by the Americans, with a view to his arrest, but never with success; the reputed spy possessing a secret means of intelligence that invariably defeated their schemes. Once, when a strong body of the Continental Army held the Four Corners for a whole summer, orders had been received from Washington himself never to leave the door of Harvey Birch unwatched. The command was rigidly obeyed, and during this long period the peddler was unseen; the detachment was withdrawn, and the following night Birch re-entered his dwelling. The father of Harvey had been greatly molested in consequence of the suspicious character of the son. But, notwithstanding the most minute scrutiny into the conduct of the old man, no fact could be substantiated against him to his injury, and his property was too small to keep alive the zeal of patriots by profession. Its confiscation and purchase would not have rewarded their trouble. Age and sorrow were now about to spare him further molestation, for the lamp of life had been drained of its oil. The recent separation of the father and son had been painful, but they had submitted in obedience to what both thought a duty. The old man

had kept his dying situation a secret from the neighborhood, in the hope that he might still have the company of his child in his last moments. The confusion of the day, and his increasing dread that Harvey might be too late, helped to hasten the event he would fain arrest for a little while. As night set in his illness increased to such a degree that the dismayed house-keeper sent a truant boy, who had shut up himself with them during the combat, to the Locusts, in quest of a companion to cheer her solitude. Caesar, alone, could be spared, and, loaded with eatables and cordials by the kind-hearted Miss Peyton, the black had been dispatched on this duty. The dying man was past the use of medicines, and his chief anxiety seemed to center in a meeting with his child.

The noise of the chase had been heard by the group in the house, but its cause was not understood; and as both the black and Katy were apprised of the detachment of American horse being below them, they supposed it to proceed from the return of that party. They heard the dragoons as they moved slowly by the building; but, in compliance with the prudent injunction of the black, the housekeeper forbore to indulge her curiosity. The old man had closed his eyes, and his attendants believed him to be asleep. The house contained two large rooms, and as many small ones. One of the former served for kitchen and sitting-room; in the other lay the father of Birch; of the latter, one was the sanctuary of the vestal, and the other contained the stock of provisions. A huge chimney of stone rose in the center, serving, of itself, for a partition between the larger rooms; and fireplaces of corresponding dimensions were in each apartment. A bright flame was burning in that of the common room, and within the very jambs of its monstrous jaw sat Caesar and Katy, at the time of which we write. The African was impressing his caution on the house-keeper, and commenting on the general danger of indulging an idle curiosity.

"Best nebber tempt a Satan," said Caesar, rolling up his eyes till the whites glistened by the glare of the fire; "I

berry like heself to lose an ear for carrying a little bit of a letter; dere much mischief come of curiosity. If dere had nebber been a man curious to see Africa dere would be no color people out of dere own country; but I wish Harvey get back."

"It is very disregardful in him to be away such a long time," said Katy, imposingly. "Suppose, now, his father wanted to make his last will in the testament, who is there to do so solemn and awful an act for him? Harvey is a very wasteful and a very disregardful man."

"Perhaps he make him afore?"

"It would not be a wonderment if he had," returned the housekeeper; "he is whole days looking into the Bible."

"Then he read a berry good book," said the black, solemnly; "Miss Fanny read in him to Dinah now and den."

"You are right, Cæsar. The Bible is the best of books, and one that reads it as often as Harvey's father should have the best of reasons for so doing. This is no more than common sense."

She rose from her seat, and stealing softly to a chest of drawers in the room of the sick man, she took from it a large Bible, heavily bound, and secured with strong clasps of brass, with which she returned to the negro. The volume was eagerly opened, and they proceeded instantly to examine its pages. Katy was far from an expert scholar, and to Cæsar the characters were absolutely strangers. For some time the housekeeper was occupied in finding out the word Matthew, in which she had no sooner succeeded than she pointed out the word, with great complacency, to the attentive Cæsar.

"Berry well, now look him t'rough," said the black, peeping over the housekeeper's shoulder, as he held a long, lank candle, of yellow tallow, in such a manner as to throw its feeble light on the volume.

"Yes, but I must begin with the very beginning of the book," replied the other, turning the leaves carefully back, until, moving two at once, she lighted upon a page covered with writing. "Here," said the housekeeper, shaking with the eagerness of expectation, "here are the

very words themselves; now I would give the world itself to know whom he has left the big silver shoe-buckles to."

"Read 'em," said Cæsar, laconically.

"And the black walnut drawers; for Harvey could never want furniture of that quality as long as he is a bachelor!"

"Why he no want 'em as well as he fader?"

"And the six silver tablespoons; Harvey always uses the iron."

"P'r'ap he say, widout so much talk," returned the sententious black, pointing one of his crooked and dingy fingers at the open volume.

Thus repeatedly advised, and impelled by her own curiosity, Katy began to read. Anxious to come to the part which most interested herself, she dipped at once into the center of the subject.

"*Chester Birch, born September 1, 1755*"—read the spinster, with a deliberation that did no great honor to her scholarship.

"Well, what he gib him?"

"*Abigail Birch, born July 12, 1757,*" continued the housekeeper, in the same tone.

"I t'ink he ought to gib her 'e spoon."

"*June 1, 1760.—On this awful day the judgment of an offended God lighted on my house:*"—a heavy groan from an adjoining room made the spinster instinctively close the volume, and Cæsar, for a moment, shook with fear. Neither possessed sufficient resolution to go and examine the condition of the sufferer, but his heavy breathing continued as usual. Katy dare not, however, reopen the Bible, and carefully securing its clasps, it was laid on the table in silence. Cæsar took his chair again, and after looking timidly round the room, remarked:

"I t'ought he time war come!"

"No," said Katy, solemnly, "he will live till the tide is out, or the first cock crows in the morning."

"Poor man!" continued the black, nestling still farther into the chimney-corner, "I hope he lay quiet after he die."

"'Twould be no astonishment to me if he didn't, for they say an unquiet life makes an uneasy grave."

"Johnny Birch a very good man in he way. All mankind can't be a minister; for if he do, who would be a congregation?"

"Ah! Cæsar, he is good only who does good—can you tell me why honestly gotten gold should be hidden in the bowels of the earth?"

"Grach!—I t'ink it must be to keep t'e Skinner from findin' him; if he know where he be, why don't he dig him up?"

"There may be reasons not comprehensible to you," said Katy, moving her chair so that her clothes covered the charmed stone, underneath which lay the secret treasures of the peddler, unable to refrain speaking of that which she would have been very unwilling to reveal; "but a rough outside often holds a smooth inside." Cæsar stared around the building, unable to fathom the hidden meaning of his companion, when his roving eyes suddenly became fixed and his teeth chattered with affright. The change in the countenance of the black was instantly perceived by Katy, and turning her face, she saw the peddler himself standing within the door of the room.

"Is he alive?" asked Birch, tremulously, and seemingly afraid to receive the answer.

"Surely," said Katy, rising hastily, and officiously offering her chair; "he must live till day, or till the tide is down."

Disregarding all but the fact that his father still lived, the peddler stole gently into the room of his dying parent. The tie which bound the father and son was of no ordinary kind. In the wide world they were all to each other. Had Katy read but a few lines farther in the record, she would have seen the sad tale of their misfortunes. At one blow competence and kindred had been swept from them, and from that day to the present hour, persecution and distress had followed their wandering steps. Approaching the bedside, Harvey leaned his body forward, and, in a voice nearly choked by his feelings, he whispered near the ear of the sick:

"Father, do you know me?"

The parent slowly opened his eyes, and a smile of satisfaction passed over his pal-

lid features, leaving behind it the impression of death, more awful by the contrast. The peddler gave a restorative he had brought with him to the parched lips of the sick man, and for a few minutes new vigor seemed imparted to his frame. He spoke, but slowly, and with difficulty. Curiosity kept Katy silent; awe had the same effect on Cæsar; and Harvey seemed hardly to breathe as he listened to the language of the departing spirit.

"My son," said the father, in a hollow voice, "God is as merciful as he is just; if I threw the cup of salvation from my lips when a youth, he graciously offers it to me in mine age. He has chastised to purify, and I go to join the spirits of our lost family. In a little while, my child, you will be alone. I know you too well not to foresee you will be a pilgrim through life. The bruised reed may endure, but it will never rise. You have that within you, Harvey, that will guide you aright; persevere, as you have begun, for the duties of life are never to be neglected—and"—A noise in the adjoining room interrupted the dying man, and the impatient peddler hastened to learn the cause, followed by Katy and the black. The first glance of his eye on the figure in the doorway told the trader but too well his errand, and the fate that probably awaited himself.

The intruder was a man still young in years, but his lineaments bespoke a mind long agitated by evil passions. His dress was of the meanest materials, and so ragged and unseemly as to give him the appearance of studied poverty. His hair was prematurely whitened, and his sunken, lowering eye avoided the bold, forward look of innocence. There was a restlessness in his movements, and an agitation in his manner, that proceeded from the workings of the foul spirit within him, and which was not less offensive to others than distressing to himself. This man was a well-known leader of one of those gangs of marauders who infested the county with a semblance of patriotism, and who were guilty of every grade of offense, from simple theft up to murder. Behind him stood several other figures clad in a

similar manner, but whose countenances expressed nothing more than the indifference of brutal insensibility. They were all well armed with muskets and bayonets, and provided with the usual implements of foot-soldiers. Harvey knew resistance to be in vain, and quietly submitted to their directions. In the twinkling of an eye both he and Cæsar were stripped of their decent garments, and made to exchange clothes with two of the filthiest of the band. They were then placed in separate corners of the room, and, under the muzzles of the muskets, required faithfully to answer such interrogatories as were put to them.

"Where is your pack?" was the first question to the peddler.

"Hear me," said Birch, trembling with agitation; "in the next room is my father, now in the agonies of death; let me go to him, receive his blessing, and close his eyes, and you shall have all—ay, all."

"Answer me as I put the question or this musket shall send you to keep the old driveler company; where is your pack?"

"I will tell you nothing, unless you let me go to my father," said the peddler, resolutely.

His persecutor raised his arm with a malicious sneer, and was about to execute his threat, when one of his companions checked him.

"What would you do?" he said, "you surely forget the reward. Tell us where are your goods, and you shall go to your father."

Birch complied instantly, and a man was dispatched in quest of the booty; he soon returned, throwing the bundle on the floor, swearing it was as light as feathers.

"Ay," cried the leader, "there must be gold somewhere for what it did contain. Give us your gold, Mr. Birch; we know you have it; you will not take continental, not you."

"You break your faith," said Harvey.

"Give us your gold," exclaimed the other, furiously, pricking the peddler with his bayonet until the blood followed his

pushes in streams. At this instant a slight movement was heard in the adjoining room, and Harvey cried, imploringly:

"Let me—let me go to my father, and you shall have all."

"I swear you shall go then," said the Skinner.

"Here, take the trash," cried Birch, as he threw aside the purse, which he had contrived to conceal notwithstanding the change in his garments.

The robber raised it from the floor with a hellish laugh.

"Ay, but it shall be to your Father in heaven."

"Monster! have you no feeling, no faith, no honesty?"

"To hear him, one would think there was not a rope around his neck already," said the other, laughing. "There is no necessity for your being uneasy, Mr. Birch; if the old man gets a few hours the start of you in the journey, you will be sure to follow him before noon to-morrow."

This unfeeling communication had no effect on the peddler, who listened with gasping breath to every sound from the room of his parent, until he heard his own name spoken in the hollow, sepulchral tones of death. Birch could endure no more, but shrieking out—

"Father! hush—father! I come—I come;" he darted by his keeper, and was the next moment pinned to the wall by the bayonet of another of the band. Fortunately, his quick motion had caused him to escape a thrust aimed at his life, and it was by his clothes only that he was confined.

"No, Mr. Birch," said the Skinner; "we know you too well for a slippery rascal to trust you out of sight—your gold, your gold!"

"You have it," said the peddler, writhing with agony.

"Ay, we have the purse, but you have more purses. King George is a prompt paymaster, and you have done him many a piece of good service. Where is your hoard? Without it you will never see your father."

"Remove the stone underneath the

woman," cried the peddler, eagerly—"remove the stone."

"He raves! he raves!" said Katy, instinctively moving her position to a different stone from the one on which she had been standing. In a moment it was torn from its bed, and nothing but earth was seen beneath.

"He raves! you have driven him from his right mind," continued the trembling spinster; "would any man in his senses keep gold under a hearth?"

"Peace, babbling fool!" cried Harvey. "Lift the corner stone, and you will find that which will make you rich, and me a beggar."

"And then you will be despicable," said the housekeeper, bitterly. "A peddler without goods and without money is sure to be despicable."

"There will be enough left to pay for his halter," cried the Skinner, who was not slow to follow the instructions of Harvey, soon lighting upon a store of English guineas. The money was quickly transferred to a bag, notwithstanding the declarations of the spinster that her dues were unsatisfied, and that, of right, ten of the guineas were her property.

Delighted with a prize that greatly exceeded their expectations, the band prepared to depart, intending to take the peddler with them, in order to give him up to the American troops above, and to claim the reward offered for his apprehension. Everything was ready, and they were about to lift Birch in their arms, for he resolutely refused to move an inch, when a form appeared in their midst which appalled the stoutest hearts among them. The father had arisen from his bed, and he tottered forth at the cries of his son. Around his body was thrown the sheet of the bed, and his fixed eye and haggard face gave him the appearance of a being from another world. Even Katy and Cæsar thought it was the spirit of the elder Birch, and they fled the house, followed by the alarmed Skinners in a body.

The excitement, which had given the sick man strength, soon vanished, and the peddler, lifting him in his arms, reconveyed him to his bed. The reaction of the sys-

tem which followed hastened to close the scene.

The glazed eye of the father was fixed upon the son; his lips moved, but his voice was unheard. Harvey bent down, and, with the parting breath of his parent, received his dying benediction. A life of privation and of wrongs embittered most of the future hours of the peddler. But under no sufferings, in no misfortunes, the subject of poverty and obloquy, the remembrance of that blessing never left him; it constantly gleamed over the images of the past, shedding a holy radiance around his saddest hours of despondency; it cheered the prospect of the future with the prayers of a pious spirit; and it brought the sweet assurance of having faithfully and truly discharged the sacred offices of filial love.

The retreat of Cæsar and the spinster had been too precipitate to admit of much calculation; yet they themselves instinctively separated from the Skinners. After fleeing a short distance they paused, and the maiden commenced, in a solemn voice:

"Oh! Cæsar, was it not dreadful to walk before he had been laid in his grave! It must have been the money that disturbed him: they say Captain Kidd walks near the spot where he buried gold in the old war."

"I neber t'ink Johnny Birch hab such a big eye!" said the African, his teeth yet chattering with the fright.

"I'm sure 'twould be a botherment to a living soul to lose so much money. Harvey will be nothing but an utterly despicable, poverty-stricken wretch. I wonder who he thinks would be even his housekeeper?"

"Maybe a spook take away Harvey, too," observed Cæsar, moving still nearer to the side of the maiden. But a new idea had seized the imagination of the spinster. She thought it not improbable that the prize had been forsaken in the confusion of the retreat; and after deliberating and reasoning for some time with Cæsar, they determined to venture back, and ascertain this important fact, and if possible learn what had been the fate of the peddler. Much time was spent in cau-

tiously approaching the dreaded spot; and as the spinster had sagaciously placed herself in the line of the retreat of the Skinners, every stone was examined in the progress in search of the abandoned gold. But although the suddenness of the alarm and the cry of Cæsar had impelled the freebooters to so hasty a retreat, they grasped the hoard with a hold that death itself would not have loosened. Perceiving everything to be quiet within, Katy at length mustered resolution to enter the dwelling, where she found the peddler with a heavy heart, performing the last sad offices for the dead. A few words sufficed to explain to Katy the nature of her mistake; but Cæsar continued to his dying day to astonish the sable inmates of the kitchen with learned dissertations on *spooks*, and to relate how direful was the appearance of that of Johnny Birch.

The danger compelled the peddler to abridge even the short period that American custom leaves the deceased with us; and aided by the black and Katy, his painful task was soon ended. Cæsar volunteered to walk a couple of miles with orders to a carpenter; and, the body being habited in its ordinary attire, was left, with a sheet thrown decently over it, to await the return of the messenger.

The Skinners had fled precipitately to the wood, which was but a short distance from the house of Birch, and once safely sheltered within its shades, they halted and mustered their panic-stricken forces.

"What in the name of fury seized your coward hearts?" cried their dissatisfied leader, drawing his breath heavily.

"The same question might be asked yourself," returned one of the band, sulenly.

"From your fright, I thought a party of De Lancey's men were upon us. Oh! you are brave gentlemen at a race!"

"We follow our captain."

"Then follow me back, and let us secure the scoundrel and receive the reward."

"Yes; and by the time we reach the house, that black rascal will have the mad Virginian upon us! by my soul, I would rather meet fifty Cow-boys than that single man."

"Fool!" cried the enraged leader, "don't you know Dunwoodie's horse are at the Corners, full two miles from here?"

"I care not where the dragoons are, but I will swear that I saw Captain Lawton enter the house of old Wharton, while I lay watching an opportunity of getting the British colonel's horse from the stable."

"And if he should come, won't a bullet silence a dragoon from the South as well as one from old England?"

"Ay, but I don't choose a hornet's nest about my ears; raze the skin of one of that corps, and you will never see another peaceable night's foraging again."

"Well," muttered the leader as they retired deeper into the wood, "this sottish peddler will stay to see the old devil buried; and though we cannot touch him at the funeral (for that would raise every old woman and priest in America against us), he'll wait to look after the movables, and to-morrow night shall wind up his concerns."

With this threat they withdrew to one of their usual places of resort, until darkness should again give them an opportunity of marauding on the community without danger of detection.

CHAPTER XI.

O woe! O woful, woful, woful day!
Most lamentable day: most woful day
That ever, ever, I did yet behold!
O day! O day! O day! O hateful day!
Never was seen so black a day as this:
O woful day! O woful day!

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE family at the Locusts had slept, or watched, through all the disturbances at the cottage of Birch, in perfect ignorance of their occurrence. The attacks of the Skinners were always made with so much privacy as to exclude the sufferers, not only from succor, but frequently, through a dread of future depredations, from the commiseration of their neighbors also. Additional duties had drawn the ladies from their pillows at an hour somewhat



"Berry well, now look him frough," said the black, peeping over the housekeeper's shoulder, as he held a long, lank candle of yellow tallow in such a manner as to throw its feeble light on the volume.—*The Spy*.

earlier than usual; and Captain Lawton, notwithstanding the sufferings of his body, had risen in compliance with a rule from which he never departed, of sleeping but six hours at a time. This was one of the few points, in which the care of the human frame was involved, on which the trooper and the surgeon of horse were ever known to agree. The doctor had watched, during the night, by the side of the bed of Captain Singleton, without once closing his eyes. Occasionally he would pay a visit to the wounded Englishman, who, being more hurt in the spirit than in the flesh, tolerated the interruptions with a very ill grace; and once, for an instant, he ventured to steal softly to the bed of his obstinate comrade, and was near succeeding in obtaining a touch of his pulse, when a terrible oath, sworn by the trooper in a dream, startled the prudent surgeon, and warned him of a trite saying in the corps, "that Captain Lawton always slept with one eye open." This group had assembled in one of the parlors as the sun made its appearance over the eastern hill, dispersing the columns of fog which had enveloped the low land.

Miss Peyton was looking from a window in the direction of the tenement of the peddler, and was expressing a kind anxiety after the welfare of the sick man, when the person of Katy suddenly emerged from the dense covering of an earthly cloud, whose mists were scattering before the cheerful rays of the sun, and was seen making hasty steps toward the Locusts. There was that in the air of the house-keeper which bespoke distress of an unusual nature, and the kind-hearted mistress of the Locusts opened the door of the room with the benevolent intention of soothing a grief that seemed so overwhelming. A nearer view of the disturbed features of the visitor confirmed Miss Peyton in her belief; and, with the shock that gentle feelings ever experience at a sudden and endless separation from even the meanest of their associates, she said, hastily:

"Katy, is he gone?"

"No, ma'am," replied the disturbed damsel, with great bitterness, "he is not

yet gone, but he may go as soon as he pleases now, for the worst is done. I do verily believe, Miss Peyton, they haven't so much as left him money enough to buy him another suit of clothes to cover his nakedness, and those he has on are none of the best, I can tell you."

"How," exclaimed the other, astonished, "could anyone have the heart to plunder a man in such distress?"

"Hearts!" repeated Katy, catching her breath; "men like them have no bowels at all. Plunder and distress, indeed! Why, ma'am, there were in the iron pot, in plain sight, fifty-four guineas of gold, besides what lay underneath, which I couldn't count without handling; and I didn't like to touch it, for they say that another's gold is apt to stick—so, judging from that in sight, there wasn't less than two hundred guineas, besides what might have been in the deerskin purse. But Harvey is little better now than a beggar, and a beggar, Miss Jeanette, is the most awfully despicable of all earthly creatures."

"Poverty is to be pitied, and not despised," said the lady, still unable to comprehend the extent of the misfortune that had befallen her neighbor during the night. "But how is the old man? and does this loss affect him much?"

The countenance of Katy changed from the natural expression of concern to the set form of melancholy, as she answered:

"He is happily removed from the cares of the world; the chinking of the money made him get out of his bed, and the poor soul found the shock too great for him. He died about two hours and ten minutes before the cock crowed, as near as we can say;"—she was interrupted by the physician, who, approaching, inquired, with much interest, the nature of the disorder. Glancing her eye over the figure of this new acquaintance, Katy, instinctively adjusting her dress, replied:

"'Twas the troubles of the times, and the loss of property, that brought him down; he wasted from day to day, and all my care and anxiety were lost; for now Harvey is no better than a beggar,

and who is there to pay me for what I have done?"

"God will reward you for all the good you have done," said Miss Peyton, mildly.

"Yes," interrupted the spinster, hastily, and with an air of reverence that was instantly succeeded by an expression that denoted more of worldly care; "but then I have left my wages for three years past in the hands of Harvey, and how am I to get them? My brothers told me, again and again, to ask for my money; but I always thought accounts between relations were easily settled."

"Were you related, then, to Birch?" asked Miss Peyton, observing her to pause.

"Why," returned the housekeeper, hesitating a little, "I thought we were as good as so. I wonder if I have no claim on the house and garden; though they say now it is Harvey's, it will surely be confiscated;" turning to Lawton, who had been sitting in one posture, with his piercing eyes lowering at her through his thick brows in silence, "perhaps this gentleman knows—he seems to take an interest in my story."

"Madam," said the trooper, bowing very low, "both you and the tale are extremely interesting"—Katy smiled involuntarily—"but my humble knowledge is limited to the setting of a squadron in the field, and using it when there. I beg leave to refer you to Dr. Archibald Sitgreaves, a gentleman of universal attainments, and unbounded philanthropy; the very milk of human sympathies, and a mortal foe to all indiscriminate cutting."

The surgeon drew up, and employed himself in whistling a low air as he looked over some phials on the table; but the housekeeper, turning to him with an inclination of the head, continued—

"I suppose, sir, a woman has no dower in her husband's property, unless they be actually married?"

It was a maxim with Dr. Sitgreaves that no species of knowledge was to be despised; and consequently, he was an empiric in everything but his profession. At first indignation at the irony of his comrade kept him silent; but, suddenly

changing his purpose, he answered the applicant with a good-natured smile—

"I judge not. If death has anticipated your nuptials, I am fearful you have no remedy against his stern decrees."

To Katy this sounded well, although she understood nothing of its meaning but "death" and "nuptials." To this part of his speech, then, she directed her reply.

"I did think he only waited the death of the old gentleman before he married," said the housekeeper, looking on the carpet; "but now he is nothing more than despicable, or, what's the same thing, a peddler without house, pack, or money. It might be hard for a man to get a wife at all in such a predicament—don't you think it would, Miss Peyton?"

"I seldom trouble myself with such things," said the lady, gravely.

During this dialogue Captain Lawton had been studying the countenance and manner of the housekeeper with a most ludicrous gravity; and, fearful the conversation would cease, he inquired, with an appearance of great interest:

"You think it was age and debility that removed the old gentleman at last?"

"And the troublesome times. Trouble is a heavy pull-down to a sick bed; but I suppose his time had come, and when that happens it matters but little what doctor's stuff we take."

"Let me set you right in that particular," interrupted the surgeon; "we must all die, it is true, but it is permitted us to use the lights of science in arresting dangers as they occur until——"

"We can die *secundum artem*," cried the trooper.

To this observation the physician did not deign to reply; but deeming it necessary to his professional dignity that the conversation should continue, he added:

"Perhaps, in this instance, judicious treatment might have prolonged the life of the patient. Who administered to the case?"

"No one yet," said the housekeeper, with quickness; "I expect he has made his last will in the testament."

The surgeon disregarded the smile of the ladies, and pursued his inquiries.

"It is doubtless wise to be prepared for death. But under whose care was the sick man during his indisposition?"

"Under mine," answered Katy, with an air of a little importance, "and care thrown away I may well call it; for Harvey is quite too despicable to be any sort of compensation at present."

The mutual ignorance of each other's meaning made very little interruption to the dialogue, for both took a good deal for granted, and Sitgreaves pursued the subject.

"And how did you treat him?"

"Kindly, you may be certain," said Katy, rather tartly.

"The doctor means medically, madam," observed Captain Lawton, with a face that would have honored the funeral of the deceased.

"I doctor'd him mostly with yarbs," said the housekeeper, smiling, as if conscious of error.

"With simples," returned the surgeon; "they are safer in the hands of the unlettered than more powerful remedies; but why had you no regular attendant?"

"I'm sure Harvey has suffered enough already with having so much concerns with the rig'lars," said the housekeeper; "he has lost his all, and made himself a vagabond through the land; and I have reason to rue the day I ever crossed the threshold of his house."

"Dr. Sitgreaves does not mean a rig'lar soldier, but a regular physician, madam," said the trooper.

"Oh!" cried the maiden, again correcting herself, "for the best of all reasons; there was none to be had, so I took care of him myself. If there had been a doctor at hand, I am sure we would gladly have had him; for my part, I am clear for doctoring, though Harvey says I am killing myself with medicines; but I am sure it will make but little difference to him, whether I live or die."

"Therein you show your sense," said the surgeon, approaching the spinster, who sat holding the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet to the genial

heat of a fine fire, making the most of comfort amid all her troubles; you appear to be a sensible, discreet woman, and some who have had opportunities of acquiring more correct views might envy you your respect for knowledge and the lights of science."

Although the housekeeper did not altogether comprehend the other's meaning, she knew he used a compliment, and as such was highly pleased with what he said; with increased animation, therefore, she cried, "It was always said of me, that I wanted nothing but opportunity to make quite a physician myself; so long as before I came to live with Harvey's father, they called me the petticoat doctor."

"More true than civil, I dare say," returned the surgeon, losing sight of the woman's character in his admiration of her respect for the healing art. "In the absence of more enlightened counselors, the experience of a discreet matron is frequently of great efficacy in checking the progress of disease; under such circumstances, madam, it is dreadful to have to contend with ignorance and obstinacy."

"Bad enough, as I well know from experience," cried Katy, in triumph: "Harvey is as obstinate about such things as a dumb beast; one would think the care I took of his bed-ridden father might learn him better than to despise good nursing. But some day he may know what it is to want a careful woman in his house, though now I am sure he is too despicable himself to have a house."

"Indeed, I can easily comprehend the mortification you must have felt in having one so self-willed to deal with," returned the surgeon, glancing his eye reproachfully at his comrade; "but you should rise superior to such opinions, and pity the ignorance by which they are engendered."

The housekeeper hesitated a moment, at a loss to comprehend all that the surgeon expressed, yet she felt it was both complimentary and kind; therefore, suppressing her natural flow of language a little, she replied:

"I tell Harvey his conduct is often condemnable, and last night he made my

words good ; but the opinions of such unbelievers is not very consequential ; yet it is dreadful to think how he behaves at times ; now, when he threw away the needle ——”

“What !” said the surgeon, interrupting her, “does he affect to despise the needle ? But it is my lot to meet with men, daily, who are equally perverse, and who show a still more culpable disrespect for the information that flows from the lights of science.”

The doctor turned his face toward Captain Lawton while speaking, but the elevation of the head prevented his eyes from resting on the grave countenance maintained by the trooper. Katy listened with admiring attention, and when the other had done, she added :

“Then Harvey is a disbeliever in the tides.”

“Not believe in the tides !” repeated the healer of bodies, in astonishment ; “does the man distrust his senses ? But perhaps it is the influence of the moon he doubts.”

“That he does !” exclaimed Katy, shaking with delight at meeting with a man of learning who could support her favorite opinions. “If you was to hear him talk, you would think he didn’t believe there was such a thing as moon at all.”

“It is the misfortune of ignorance and incredulity, madam, that they feed themselves. The mind once rejecting useful information, insensibly leans to superstition and conclusions on the order of nature that are not less prejudicial to the cause of truth than they are at variance with the first principles of human knowledge.”

The spinster was too much awestruck to venture an undigested reply to this speech ; and the surgeon, after pausing a moment in a kind of philosophical disdain, continued :

“That any man in his senses can doubt of the flux of the tides is more than I could have thought possible ; yet obstinacy is a dangerous inmate to harbor, and may lead us into many an error, however gross.”

“You think, then, they have an effect on the flux ?” said the housekeeper inquiringly.

Miss Peyton rose, and beckoned her nieces to give her their assistance in the adjoining pantry, while for a moment the dark visage of the attentive Lawton was lighted by an animation that vanished by an effort as powerful and as sudden as the one that drew it into being.

After reflecting whether he rightly understood the meaning of the other, the surgeon, making due allowance for the love of learning acting upon a want of education, replied :

“The moon, you mean ; many philosophers have doubted how far it affects the tides ; but I think it is willfully rejecting the lights of science not to believe it causes both the flux and reflux.”

As reflux was a disorder with which Katy was not acquainted, she thought it prudent to be silent ; yet burning with curiosity to know the meaning of certain portentous lights to which the other so often alluded, she ventured to ask :

“If them lights he spoke of were what was called northern lights in these parts ?”

In charity to her ignorance, the surgeon would have entered into an elaborate explanation of his meaning, had he not been interrupted by the mirth of Lawton. The trooper had listened so far with great composure ; but now he laughed until his aching bones reminded him of his fall, and the tears rolled over his cheeks in larger drops than had ever been seen there before. At length the offended physician seized an opportunity of a pause to say :

“To you, Captain Lawton, it may be a source of triumph that an uneducated woman should make a mistake in a subject on which men of science have long been at variance ; but yet you find this respectable matron does not reject the lights—does not reject the use of proper instruments in repairing injuries sustained by the human frame. You may possibly remember, sir, her allusion to the use of the needle.”

“Ay,” cried the delighted trooper, “to mend the peddler’s breeches.”

Katy drew up in evident displeasure,

and prompt to vindicate her character for more lofty requirements, she said :

"'Twas not a common use that I put that needle to—but one of much greater virtue."

"Explain yourself, madam," said the surgeon, impatiently, "that this gentleman may see how little reason he has for exultation."

Thus solicited, Katy paused to collect sufficient eloquence to garnish her narrative. The substance of her tale was, that a child who had been placed by the guardians of the poor in the keeping of Harvey, had, in the absence of its master, injured itself badly in the foot by a large needle. The offending instrument had been carefully greased, wrapped in woolen, and placed in the certain charmed nook of the chimney, while the foot, from a fear of weakening the incantation, was left in a state of nature. The arrival of the peddler had altered the whole of this admirable treatment; and the consequences were expressed by Katy, as she concluded her narrative, by saying :

"'Twas no wonder the boy died of a lockjaw !"

Doctor Sitgreaves looked out of the window in admiration of the brilliant morning, striving all he could to avoid the basilisk eyes of his comrade. He was impelled by a feeling that he could not conquer to look Captain Lawton in the face. The trooper had arranged every muscle of his countenance to express sympathy for the fate of the poor child; but the exultation of his eyes cut the astounded man of science to the quick; he muttered something concerning the condition of his patients, and retreated with precipitation.

Miss Peyton entered into the situation of things at the house of the peddler with all the interest of her excellent feelings; she listened patiently while Katy recounted, more particularly, the circumstances of the past night as they had occurred. The spinster did not forget to dwell on the magnitude of the pecuniary loss sustained by Harvey, and in no manner spared her invectives at his betraying a secret which might so easily have been kept.

"For, Miss Peyton," continued the housekeeper, after a pause to take breath, "I would have given up life before I would have given up that secret. At the most, they could only have killed him, and now a body may say that they have slain both soul and body; or what's the same thing, they have made him a despicable vagabond. I wonder who he thinks would be his wife, or who would keep his house. For my part, my good name is too precious to be living with a lone man; though, for the matter of that, he is never there. I am resolved to tell him this day, that stay there, a single woman, I will not an hour, after the funeral, and marry him I don't think I will, unless he becomes steadier and more of a homebody."

The mild mistress of the Locusts suffered the exuberance of the housekeeper's feeling to expend itself, and then, by one or two judicious questions, that denoted a more intimate knowledge of the windings of the human heart in matters of Cupid than might fairly be supposed to belong to a spinster, she extracted enough from Katy to discover the improbability of Harvey's ever presuming to offer himself, with his broken fortunes, to the acceptance of Katharine Haynes. She therefore mentioned her own want of assistance in the present state of her household, and expressed a wish that Katy would change her residence to the Locusts, in case the peddler had no further use for her services. After a few preliminary conditions on the part of the wary housekeeper, the arrangement was concluded; and making a few more piteous lamentations on the weight of her own losses, the stupidity of Harvey, united with some curiosity to know the future fate of the peddler, Katy withdrew to make the necessary preparations for the approaching funeral, which was to take place that day.

During the interview between the two females, Lawton, through delicacy, had withdrawn. Anxiety took him to the room of Captain Singleton. The character of this youth, it has already been shown, endeared him in a peculiar manner to every officer in the corps. The singularly mild deportment of the young dragoon

had, on so many occasions, been proved not to proceed from want of resolution, that his almost feminine softness of manner and appearance had failed to bring him into disrepute, even in that band of partisan warriors.

To the major he was as dear as a brother, and his easy submission to the directions of his surgeon had made him a marked favorite with Dr. Sitgreaves. The rough usage the corps often received in its daring attacks had brought each of its officers, in succession, under the temporary keeping of the surgeon. To Captain Singleton the man of science had decreed the palm of docility, on such occasions, and Captain Lawton he had fairly black-balled. He frequently declared, with unconquerable simplicity and earnestness of manner, that it gave him more pleasure to see the former brought in wounded than any officer in the squadron, and that the latter afforded him the least; a compliment and condemnation that was usually received by the first of the parties with a quiet smile of good nature, and by the last with a grave bow of thanks. On the present occasion the mortified surgeon and exulting trooper met in the room of Captain Singleton, as a place where they could act on common ground. Some time was occupied in joint attentions to the comfort of the wounded officer, and the doctor retired to an apartment prepared for his own accommodation; here, within a few minutes, he was surprised by the entrance of Lawton. The triumph of the trooper had been so complete that he felt he could afford to be generous, and commencing by involuntarily throwing aside his coat, he cried, carelessly:

"Sitgreaves, administer a little of the aid of the lights of science to my body, if you please."

The surgeon was beginning to feel this was a subject that was intolerable, but venturing a glance toward his comrade, he saw, with surprise, the preparations he had made, and an air of sincerity about him that was unusual to his manner when making such a request. Changing his intended burst of resentment to a tone of civil inquiry, he said—

"Does Captain Lawton want anything at my hands?"

"Look for yourself, my dear sir," said the trooper, mildly; "there seems to be most of the colors of the rainbow on this shoulder."

"You have reason for saying so," said the other, handling the part with great tenderness and consummate skill; "but happily nothing is broken. It is wonderful how well you escaped!"

"I have been a tumbler from my youth, and I am past minding a few falls from a horse; but, Sitgreaves," he added with affection, and pointing to a scar on his body, "do you remember this bit of work?"

"Perfectly well, Jack; it was bravely obtained and neatly extracted; but don't you think I had better apply an oil to these bruises?"

"Certainly," said Lawton, with unexpected condescension.

"Now, my dear boy," cried the doctor, exultingly, as he busied himself in applying the remedy to the hurts, "do you not think it would have been better to have done all this last night?"

"Quite probable."

"Yes, Jack, if you had let me perform the operation of phlebotomy when I first saw you, it would have been of infinite service."

"No phlebotomy," said the other positively.

"It is now too late; but a dose of oil would carry off the humors famously."

To this the captain made no reply, but grated his teeth in a way that showed the fortress of his mouth was not to be assailed without a resolute resistance; and the experienced physician changed the subject by saying:

"It is a pity, John, that you did not catch the rascal, after the danger and trouble you incurred."

The captain of dragoons made no reply; and, while placing some bandages on the wounded shoulder, the surgeon continued:

"If I had any wish at all to destroy human life, it is to have the pleasure of seeing that traitor hanged."

"I thought your business was to cure, and not to slay," said the trooper dryly.

"Ay! but he has caused us such heavy losses by his information, that I sometimes feel a very unphilosophical temper toward that spy."

"You should not encourage such feelings of animosity to any of your fellow-creatures," returned Lawton, in a tone that caused the operator to drop a pin he was arranging in the bandages from his hand. He looked the patient in the face to remove all doubts of his identity. Finding, however, it was his old comrade, Captain John Lawton, who had spoken, he rallied his astonished faculties, and proceeded by saying:

"Your doctrine is just, and in general I subscribe to it. But, John, my good fellow, is the bandage easy?"

"Quite."

"I agree with you as a whole; but as matter is infinitely divisible, so no case exists without an exception. Lawton, do you feel easy?"

"Very."

"It is not only cruel to the sufferer, but sometimes unjust to others, to take human life where a less punishment would answer the purpose. Now, Jack, if you were only—move your arm a little—if you were only—I hope you feel easier, my dear friend?"

"Much."

"If, my dear John, you would teach your men to cut with more discretion, it would answer you the same purpose—and give me great pleasure."

The doctor drew a heavy sigh, as he was enabled to get rid of what was nearest to his heart; and the dragoon coolly replaced his coat, saying with great deliberation as he retired—

"I know no troop that cuts more judiciously; they generally shave from the crown to the jaw."

The disappointed operator collected his instruments, and with a heavy heart proceeded to pay a visit to the room of Colonel Wellmere.

CHAPTER XII.

This fairy form contains a soul as mighty
As that which lives within a giant's frame;
These slender limbs, that tremble like the aspen
At summer evening's sigh, uphold a spirit
Which, roused, can tower to the height of heaven,
And light those shining windows of the face
With much of heaven's own radiance.—DUO.

THE number and character of her guests had greatly added to the cares of Miss Jeanette Peyton. The morning found them all restored, in some measure, to their former ease of body, with the exception of the youthful captain of dragoons, who had been so deeply regretted by Dunwoodie. The wound of this officer was severe, though the surgeon persevered in saying that it was without danger. His comrade, we have shown, had deserted his couch; and Henry Wharton awoke from a sleep that had been undisturbed by anything but a dream of suffering amputation under the hands of a surgical novice. As it proved, however, to be nothing but a dream, the youth found himself much refreshed by his slumbers; and Dr. Sitgreaves removed all further apprehensions by confidently pronouncing that he would be a well man within a fortnight.

During all this time Colonel Wellmere did not make his appearance; he breakfasted in his own room, and, notwithstanding certain significant smiles of the man of science, declared himself too much injured to rise from his bed. Leaving him, therefore, endeavoring to conceal his chagrin in the solitude of his chamber, the surgeon proceeded to the more grateful task of sitting an hour by the bedside of George Singleton. A slight flush was on the face of the patient as the doctor entered the room; and the latter advanced promptly, and laid his fingers on the pulse of the youth, beckoning him to be silent, while he muttered to himself:

"Growing symptoms of a febrile pulse—no, no, my dear George, you must remain quiet and dumb; though your eyes look better, and your skin has even a moisture."

"Nay, my dear Sitgreaves," said the youth, taking his hand, "you see there is no fever about me; look, is there any of Jack Lawton's hoar-frost on my tongue?"

"No, indeed, said the surgeon, clapping a spoon in the mouth of the other, forcing it open, and looking down his throat as if disposed to visit the interior in person; "the tongue is well and the pulse begins to lower again. Ah! the bleeding did you good. Phlebotomy is a sovereign specific for southern constitutions. But that madcap Lawton obstinately refused to be bled for a fall he had from his horse last night. Why, George, your case is becoming singular," continued the doctor, instinctively throwing aside his wig; "your pulse even and soft, your skin moist, but your eye fiery and cheek flushed. Oh! I must examine more closely into these symptoms."

"Softly, my good friend, softly," said the youth, falling back on his pillow, and losing some of that color which alarmed his companion; "I believe in extracting the ball, you did for me all that is required. I am free from pain, and only weak, I do assure you."

"Captain Singleton," said the surgeon, with heat, "it is presumptuous in you to pretend to tell your medical attendant when you are free from pain; if it be not to enable us to decide in such matters, of what avail the lights of science? For shame, George, for shame! even that perverse fellow, John Lawton, could not behave with more obstinacy."

His patient smiled, as he gently repulsed his physician in an attempt to undo the bandages, and, with a returning glow to his cheek, inquired:

"Do, Archibald"—a term of endearment that seldom failed to soften the operator's heart—"tell me what spirit from heaven has been gliding around my apartment, while I lay pretending to sleep?"

"If any one interferes with my patients," cried the doctor, hastily, "I will teach them, spirit or no spirit, what it is to meddle with another man's concerns."

"Tut—my dear fellow, there was no interference made nor any intended; see," exhibiting the bandages, "everything is as you left it—but it glided about the room with the grace of a fairy and the tenderness of an angel."

The surgeon having satisfied himself

that everything was as he had left it, very deliberately resumed his seat and replaced his wig, as he inquired, with a brevity that would have honored Lieutenant Mason:

"Had it petticoats, George?"

"I saw nothing but its heavenly eyes—its bloom—its majestic step—its grace," replied the young man, with rather more ardor than his surgeon thought consistent with his debilitated condition; and he laid his hand on his mouth to stop him, saying himself:

"It must have been Miss Jeanette Peyton—a lady of fine accomplishments, with—hem—with something of the kind of step you speak of—a very complacent eye; and as to the bloom, I dare say offices of charity can summon as fine a color to her cheeks as glows in the faces of her more youthful nieces."

"Nieces! has she nieces, then? The angel I saw may be a daughter, a sister, or a niece—but never an aunt."

"Hush, George, hush; your talking has brought your pulse up again. You must observe quiet, and prepare for a meeting with your own sister, who will be here within an hour."

"What, Isabella! and who sent for her?"

"The major."

"Considerate Dunwoodie!" murmured the exhausted youth, sinking again on his pillow, where the commands of his attendant compelled him to remain silent.

Even Captain Lawton had been received with many and courteous inquiries after the state of his health from all the members of the family when he made his morning entrance; but an invisible spirit presided over the comforts of the English colonel. Sarah had shrunk with consciousness from entering the room; yet she knew the position of every glass, and had, with her own hands, supplied the contents of every bowl that stood on his table.

At the time of our tale we were a divided people, and Sarah thought it was no more than her duty to cherish the institutions of that country to which she yet clung as the land of her forefathers; but there were other and more cogent reasons for the

silent preference she was giving to the Englishman. His image had first filled the void in her youthful fancy, and it was an image that was distinguished by many of those attractions that can enchain the female heart. It is true, he wanted the personal excellence of Peyton Dunwoodie, but his pretensions were far from contemptible. Sarah had moved about the house during the morning, casting frequent and longing glances at the door of Wellmere's apartment, anxious to learn the condition of his wounds, and yet ashamed to inquire; conscious interest kept her tongue tied, until her sister, with the frankness of innocence, had put the desired question to Dr. Sitgreaves.

"Colonel Wellmere," said the operator, gravely, "is in what I call a state of free-will, madam. He is ill, or he is well, as he pleases. His case, young lady, exceeds my art to heal; and I take it Sir Henry Clinton is the best adviser he can apply to; though Major Dunwoodie has made the communication with his leech rather difficult."

Frances smiled, but averted her face, while Sarah moved, with the grace of an offended Juno, from the apartment. Her own room, however, afforded her but little relief, and in passing through the long gallery that communicated with each of the chambers of the building, she noticed the door of Singleton's room to be open. The wounded youth seemed sleeping, and was alone. She had ventured lightly into the apartment, and busied herself for a few minutes in arranging the tables and the nourishment provided for the patient, hardly conscious of what she was doing, and possibly dreaming that these little feminine offices were performed for another. Her natural bloom was heightened by the insinuation of the surgeon, nor was the luster of her eye in any degree diminished. The sound of the approaching footstep of Sitgreaves hastened her retreat down a private stairway, to the side of her sister. The sisters then sought the fresh air on the piazza; and as they pursued their walk, arm in arm, the following dialogue took place:

"There is something disagreeable about

this surgeon of Dunwoodie," said Sarah, "that causes me to wish him away most heartily."

Frances fixed her laughing eyes on her sister; but forbearing to speak, the other readily construed their expression, and hastily added, "But I forget he is one of your renowned corps of Virginians, and must be spoken of reverently."

"As respectfully as you please, my dear sister; there is but little danger of exceeding the truth."

"Not in your opinion," said the elder, with a little warmth; "but I think Mr. Dunwoodie has taken a liberty that exceeds the rights of consanguinity; he has made our father's house a hospital."

"We ought to be grateful that none of the patients it contains are dearer to us."

"Your brother is one."

"True, true," interrupted Frances, blushing to the eyes; "but he leaves his room, and thinks his wound lightly purchased by the pleasure of being with his friends. If," she added, with a tremulous lip, "this dreadful suspicion that is affixed to his visit were removed, I could consider his wound of little moment."

"You now have the fruits of rebellion brought home to you; a brother wounded and a prisoner, and perhaps a victim; your father distressed, his privacy interrupted, and not improbably his estates torn from him, on account of his loyalty to his king."

Frances continued her walk in silence. While facing the northern entrance to the vale, her eyes were uniformly fastened on the point where the road was suddenly lost by the intervention of a hill; and at each turn, as she lost sight of the spot, she lingered until an impatient movement of her sister quickened her pace to an even motion with that of her own. At length a single horse-chaise was seen making its way carefully among the stones which lay scattered over the country road that wound through the valley and approached the cottage. The color of Frances changed as the vehicle gradually drew nearer; and when she was enabled to see a female form in it by the side of a black in livery, her limbs shook with an agita-

tion that compelled her to lean on Sarah for support. In a few minutes the travelers approached the gate. It was thrown open by a dragoon who followed the carriage, and who had been the messenger dispatched by Dunwoodie to the father of Captain Singleton. Miss Peyton advanced to receive their guest, and the sisters united in giving her the kindest welcome; still Frances could with difficulty withdraw her truant eyes from the countenance of their visitor. She was young, and of a light and fragile form, but of exquisite proportions. Her eye was large, full, black, piercing, and at times a little wild. Her hair was luxuriant, and as it was without the powder it was then the fashion to wear, it fell in raven blackness. A few of its locks had fallen on her cheek, giving its chilling whiteness, by the contrast, a more deadly character. Dr. Sitgreaves supported her from the chaise; and when she gained the floor of the piazza she turned an expressive look on the face of the practitioner.

"Your brother is out of danger, and wishes to see you, Miss Singleton," said the surgeon.

The lady burst into a flood of tears. Frances had stood contemplating the action and face of Isabella with a kind of uneasy admiration, but she now sprang to her side with the ardor of a sister, and kindly drawing her arm within her own, led the way to a retired room. The movement was so ingenuous, so considerate, and so delicate, that even Miss Peyton withheld her interference, following the youthful pair with only her eyes and a smile of complacency. The feeling was communicated to all the spectators, and they dispersed in pursuit of their usual avocations. Isabella yielded to the gentle influence of Frances without resistance; and, having gained the room where the latter conducted her, wept in silence on the shoulder of the observant and soothing girl, until Frances thought her tears exceeded the emotion natural to the occasion. The sobs of Miss Singleton for a time were violent and uncontrollable, until, with an evident exertion, she yielded to a kind observation of her companion,

and succeeded in suppressing her tears. Raising her face to the eyes of Frances, she rose, while a smile of beautiful radiance passed over her features; and making a hasty apology for the excess of her emotion, she desired to be conducted to the room of the invalid.

The meeting between the brother and sister was warm, but, by an effort on the part of the lady, more composed than her previous agitation had given reason to expect. Isabella found her brother looking better, and in less danger than her sensitive imagination had led her to suppose. Her spirits rose in proportion; from despondency, she passed to something like gayety; her beautiful eyes sparkled with renovated brilliancy; and her face was lighted with smiles so fascinating that Frances, who, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, had accompanied her to the sick chamber, sat gazing on a countenance that possessed so wonderful variability, impelled by a charm that was beyond her control. The youth had thrown an earnest look at Frances, as soon as his sister raised herself from his arms, and perhaps it was the first glance at the lovely lineaments of our heroine, when the gazer turned his eyes from the view in disappointment. He seemed bewildered, rubbed his forehead like a man awaking from a dream, and mused.

"Where is Dunwoodie, Isabella?" he said; "the excellent fellow is never weary of kind actions. After a day of such service as that of yesterday, he has spent the night in bringing me a nurse whose presence alone is able to raise me from my couch."

The expression of the lady's countenance changed; her eye roved round the apartment with a character of wildness in it that repelled the anxious Frances, who studied her movements with unabated interest.

"Dunwoodie! is he then not here? I thought to have met him by the side of my brother's bed."

"He has duties that require his presence elsewhere; the English are said to be out by the way of the Hudson, and they give us light troops but little rest; surely

nothing else could have kept him so long from a wounded friend. But, Isabella, the meeting has been too much for you; you tremble."

Isabella made no reply; she stretched her hand toward the table which held the nourishment of the captain, and the attentive Frances comprehended her wishes in a moment. A glass of water in some measure revived the sister, who was enabled to say:

"Doubtless it his duty. 'Twas said above, a royal party was moving on the river; though I passed the troops but two miles from this spot." The latter part of the sentence was hardly audible, and it was spoken more in the manner of a soliloquy than as if intended for the ears of her companions.

"On the march, Isabella?" eagerly inquired her brother.

"No, dismounted, and seemingly at rest," was the reply.

The wondering dragoon turned his gaze on the countenance of his sister, who sat with her eye bent on the carpet in unconscious absence, but found no explanation. His look was changed to the face of Frances, who, startled by the earnestness of his expression, arose, and hastily inquired if he would have any assistance.

"If you can pardon the rudeness," said the wounded officer, making a feeble effort to raise his body, "I would request to have Captain Lawton's company for a moment."

Frances hastened instantly to communicate his wish to that gentleman, and, impelled by an interest she could not control, she returned again to her seat by the side of Miss Singleton.

"Lawton," said the youth, impatiently, as the trooper entered, "hear you from the major?"

The eye of the sister was now bent on the face of the trooper, who made his salutations to the lady with ease, blended with the frankness of a soldier.

"His man has been here twice," he said, "to inquire how we fared in the Lazaretto."

"And why not himself?"

"That is a question the major can an-

swer best; but you know the red-coats are abroad and Dunwoodie commands in the county; these English must be looked to."

"True," said Singleton, slowly, as if struck with the other's reasons; "but how is it that you are idle, when there is work to do?"

"My sword-arm is not in the best condition, and Roanoke has but a shambling gait this morning; besides, there is another reason I could mention, if it were not that Miss Wharton would never forgive me."

"Speak, I beg, without fear of my displeasure," said Frances, returning the good-humored smile of the trooper with the archness natural to her own sweet face.

"The odors of your kitchen, then," cried Lawton, bluntly, "forbid my quitting the domains until I qualify myself to speak with more certainty concerning the fatness of the land."

"Oh! Aunt Jeanette is exerting herself to do credit to my father's hospitality," said the laughing girl, "and I am a truant from her labors, as I shall be a stranger to her favor, unless I proffer my assistance."

Frances withdrew to seek her aunt, musing deeply on the character and extreme sensibility of the new acquaintance chance had brought to the cottage.

The wounded officer followed her with his eyes as she moved, with infantile grace, through the door of his apartment; and as she vanished from his view he observed—

"Such an aunt and niece are seldom to be met with, Jack; this seems a fairy, but the aunt is angelic."

"You are doing well, I see; your enthusiasm for the sex holds its own."

"I should be ungrateful as well as insensible, did I not bear testimony to the loveliness of Miss Peyton."

"A good motherly lady; but as to love, that is a matter of taste. A few years younger, with deference to her prudence and experience, would accord better with my fancy."

"She must be under twenty," said the other, quickly.

"It depends on the way you count. If you begin at the heel of life, well; but if you reckon downward, as is most common, I think she is nearer forty."

"You have mistaken an elder sister for the aunt," said Isabella, laying her fair hand on the mouth of the invalid; "you must be silent! your feelings are beginning to affect your frame."

The entrance of Dr. Sitgreaves, who in some alarm noticed the increase of feverish symptoms in his patient, enforced this mandate; and the trooper withdrew to pay a visit of condolence to Roanoke, who had been an equal sufferer with himself in their last night's somerset. To his great joy, his man pronounced the steed to be equally convalescent with the master; and Lawton found that by dint of rubbing the animal's limbs several hours without ceasing, he was enabled to place his feet in what he called systematic motion. Orders were accordingly given to be in readiness to rejoin the troop at the Four Corners, as soon as his master had shared in the bounty of the approaching banquet.

In the meantime, Henry Wharton entered the apartment of Wellmere, and by his sympathy succeeded in restoring the colonel to his own good graces. The latter was consequently enabled to rise, and prepared to meet a rival of whom he had spoken so lightly, and, as the result had proved, with so little reason. Wharton knew that their misfortune, as they both termed their defeat, was owing to the other's rashness; but he forbore to speak of anything except the unfortunate accident which had deprived the English of their leader, and to which he good-naturedly ascribed their subsequent discomfiture.

"In short, Wharton," said the colonel, putting one leg out of bed, "it may be called a combination of untoward events; your own ungovernable horse prevented my orders from being carried to the major in season to flank the rebels."

"Very true," replied the captain, kicking a slipper toward the bed; "had we succeeded in getting a few good fires upon them in flank, we should have sent these brave Virginians to the right about."

"Ay! and that in double quick time," cried the colonel, making the other leg follow its companion; "then it was necessary to rout the guides, you know, and the movement gave them the best possible opportunity to charge."

"Yes," said the other, sending the second slipper after the first; "and this Major Dunwoodie never overlooks an advantage."

"I think if we had the thing to do over again," continued the colonel, raising himself on his feet, "we might alter the case very materially; though the chief thing the rebels have now to boast of is my capture; they were repulsed, you saw, in their attempt to drive us from the wood."

"At least they would have been had they made an attack," said the captain, throwing the rest of his clothes within reach of the colonel.

"Why, that is the same thing," returned Wellmere, beginning to dress himself; "to assume such an attitude as to intimidate your enemy, is the chief art of war."

"Doubtless, then, you may remember in one of their charges they were completely routed."

"True—true," cried the colonel, with animation; "had I been there to have improved that advantage, we might have turned the tables on the Yankees;" saying which, he displayed still greater animation in completing his toilet; and he was soon prepared to make his appearance, fully restored to his own good opinion, and fairly persuaded that his capture was owing to casualties absolutely beyond the control of man.

The knowledge that Colonel Wellmere was to be a guest at the table, in no degree diminished the preparations which were already making for the banquet; and Sarah, after receiving the compliments of the gentleman, and making many kind inquiries after the state of his wounds, proceeded in person to lend her counsel and taste to one of those labored entertainments which, at that day, were so frequent in country life, and which are not entirely banished from our domestic economy at the present moment.

CHAPTER XIII.

I will stand to and feed,
Although my last.—TEMPEST.

THE savor of preparation which had been noticed by Captain Lawton began to increase within the walls of the cottage; certain sweet-smelling odors, that arose from the subterranean territories of Cæsar gave to the trooper the most pleasing assurance that his olfactory nerves, which on such occasions were as acute as his eyes on others, had faithfully performed their duty; and for the benefit of enjoying the passing sweets as they arose, the dragoon so placed himself at a window of the building that not a vapor charged with the spices of the East could exhale on its passage to the clouds, without first giving its incense to his nose. Lawton, however, by no means indulged himself in this comfortable arrangement, without first making such preparations to do meet honor to the feast as his scanty wardrobe would allow. The uniform of his corps was always a passport to the best tables, and this, though somewhat tarnished by faithful service and unceremonious usage, was properly brushed and decked out for the occasion. His head, which nature had ornamented with the blackness of a crow, now shone with the whiteness of snow; and his bony hand, that so well became the saber, peered from beneath a ruffle with something like maiden coyness. The improvements of the dragoon went no further, excepting that his boots shone with more than holiday splendor, and his spurs glittered in the rays of the sun, as became the pure ore of which they were composed.

Cæsar moved through the apartments with a face charged with an importance exceeding even that which had accompanied him in his melancholy task of the morning. The black had early returned from the errand on which he had been dispatched by the peddler, and, obedient to the commands of his mistress, promptly appeared to give his services where his allegiance was due; so serious, indeed, was his duty now becoming that it was only at odd moments he was enabled to impart to his sable brother, who had been

sent in attendance on Miss Singleton to the Locusts, any portion of the wonderful incidents of the momentous night he had so lately passed. By ingeniously using, however, such occasions as accidentally offered, Cæsar communicated so many of the heads of his tale as served to open the eyes of his visitor to their fullest width. The gusto for the marvelous was innate in these sable worthies; and Miss Peyton found it necessary to interpose her authority, in order to postpone the residue of the history to a more befitting opportunity.

"Ah! Miss Jinnette," said Cæsar, shaking his head, and looking all that he expressed, "'twas awful to see Johnny Birch walk on a feet when he lie dead!"

This concluded the conversation; though the black promised himself the satisfaction, and did not fail to enjoy it, of having many a good gossip on the solemn subject at a future period.

The ghost thus happily laid, the department of Miss Peyton flourished, and by the time the afternoon's sun had traveled a two hours' journey from the meridian, the formal procession from the kitchen to the parlor commenced, under the auspices of Cæsar, who led the van, supporting a turkey on the palms of his withered hands with the dexterity of a balance-master.

Next followed the servant of Captain Lawton, bearing, as he marched stiffly, and walking wide, as if allowing room for his steed, a ham of true Virginia flavor; a present from the spinster's brother in Accomac. The supporter of this savory dish kept his eye on his trust with military precision; and by the time he reached his destination, it might be difficult to say which contained the most juice, his own mouth or the Accomac bacon.

Third in the line was to be seen the valet of Colonel Wellmere, who carried in either hand chickens, fricasseed, and oyster patties.

After him marched the attendant of Dr. Stigreaves, who had instinctively seized an enormous tureen, as most resembling matters he understood, and followed on in place, until the steams of the soup so completely bedimmed the spectacles he wore, as a badge of office, that, on

arriving at the scene of action, he was compelled to deposit his freight on the floor, until, by removing the glasses, he could see his way through the piles of reserved china and plate-warmers.

Next followed another trooper, whose duty it was to attend on Captain Singleton; and, as if apportioning his appetite to the feeble state of his master, he had contented himself with conveying a pair of ducks, roasted, until their tempting fragrance began to make him repent his having so lately demolished a breakfast that had been provided for his master's sister, with another prepared for himself.

The white boy, who belonged to the house, brought up the rear, groaning under the load of sundry dishes of vegetables that the cook, by way of climax, had unwittingly heaped on him.

But this was far from all of the preparations for that day's feast. Cæsar had no sooner deposited his bird, which, but the week before, had been flying among the highlands of Dutchess, little dreaming of so soon heading such a goodly assemblage, than he turned mechanically on his heel, and took up his line of march again for the kitchen. In this evolution the black was imitated by his companions in succession, and another procession to the parlor followed in the same order. By this admirable arrangement, whole flocks of pigeons, certain beves of quails, shoals of flat-fish, bass, and sundry woodcock, found their way into the presence of the company.

A third attack brought suitable quantities of potatoes, onions, beets, cold slaw, rice, and all the other minutæ of a goodly dinner.

The board now fairly groaned with American profusion; and Cæsar, glancing his eye over the show with a most approving conscience, after readjusting every dish that had not been placed on the table with his own hands, proceeded to acquaint the mistress of the revels that his task was happily accomplished.

Some half-hour before the culinary array just recorded took place, all the ladies disappeared, much in the same unaccountable manner that swallows flee the ap-

proach of winter. But the spring-time of their return had arrived, and the whole party were collected in an apartment that, in consequence of its containing no side-table, and being furnished with a chintz coverlet settee, was termed a withdrawing room.

The kind-hearted spinster had deemed the occasion worthy not only of extraordinary preparations in the culinary department, but had seen proper to deck her own person in garments suited to the guests whom it was now her happiness to entertain.

On her head Miss Peyton wore a cap of exquisite lawn, which was ornamented in front with a broad border of lace, that spread from the face in such a manner as to admit of a display of artificial flowers, clustered in a group on the summit of her fine forehead.

The color of her hair was lost in the profusion of powder with which it was covered; but a slight curling of the extremities in some degree relieved the formality of its arrangement, and gave a look of feminine softness to the features.

Her dress was a rich, heavy silk, of violet color, cut low around the bust, with a stomacher of the same material, that fitted close to the figure and exhibited the form, from the shoulders to the waist, in its true proportions. Below, the dress was full, and sufficiently showed that parsimony in attire was not a foible of the day. A small loop displayed the beauty of the fabric to advantage, and aided in giving majesty to the figure.

The tall stature of the lady was heightened by shoes of the same material with the dress, whose heels added more than an inch to the liberality of nature.

The sleeves were short and close to the limb, until they fell off at the elbows in large ruffles, that hung in rich profusion from the arm when extended; and duplicates and triplicates of lawn, trimmed with Dresden lace, lent their aid in giving delicacy to a hand and arm that yet retained their whiteness and symmetry. A treble row of large pearls closely encircled her throat; and a handkerchief of lace partially concealed that part of the per-

son that the silk had left exposed, but which the experience of forty years had warned Miss Peyton should now be veiled.

Thus attired, and standing erect with the lofty grace that distinguished the manners of that day, the maiden would have looked into nothingness a bevy of modern belles.

The taste of Sarah had kept even pace with the decorations of her aunt; and a dress differing in no respect from the one just described but in material and tints, exhibited her imposing form to equal advantage. The satin of her robe was of a pale bluish color. Twenty years did not, however, require the screen that was prudent in forty, and nothing but an envious border of exquisite lace hid, in some measure, what the satin left exposed to view. The upper part of the bust, and the fine fall of the shoulders, were blazing in all their native beauty, and, like the aunt, the throat was ornamented by a treble row of pearls, to correspond with which were rings of the same quality in her ears. The head was without a cap, and the hair drawn up from the countenance so as to give to the eye all the loveliness of a forehead as polished as marble and as white as snow. A few straggling curls fell gracefully on the neck, and a bouquet of artificial flowers was also placed like a coronet, over her brow.

Miss Singleton had resigned her brother to the advice of Dr. Sitgreaves, who had succeeded in getting his patient into a deep sleep, after quieting certain feverish symptoms that followed the agitation of the interview. The sister was persuaded by the observant mistress of the mansion to make one of the party, and she sat by the side of Sarah, differing but little in appearance from that lady, except in refusing the use of powder on her raven locks, and that her unusually high forehead, and large, brilliant eyes, gave an expression of thoughtfulness to her features that was possibly heightened by the paleness of her cheek.

Last and least, but not the most unlovely in this display of female charms, was the youngest daughter of Mr. Wharton. Frances, we have already men-

tioned, left the city before she had attained to the age of fashionable womanhood. A few adventurous spirits were already beginning to make inroads in those customs which had so long invaded the comforts of the fair sex; and the youthful girl had ventured to trust her beauty to the height which nature had bestowed. This was but little, but that little was a masterpiece. Frances several times had determined, in the course of the morning, to bestow more than usual pains in the decoration of her person. Each time, in succession, as she formed this resolution, she spent a few minutes in looking earnestly towards the north, and then she as invariably changed it.

At the appointed hour our heroine appeared in the drawing-room, clothed in a robe of pale blue silk, of a cut and fashion much like that worn by her sister. Her hair was left to the wild curls of nature, its exuberance being confined to the crown of her head by a long, low comb, made of light tortoise-shell, a color barely distinguishable in the golden hue of her tresses. Her dress was without a plait or a wrinkle, and fitted the form with an exactitude that might lead one to imagine the arch girl more than suspected the beauties it displayed. A tucker of rich Dresden lace softened the contour of the figure. Her head was without ornament; but around her throat was a necklace of gold clasped in front with a rich cornelian.

Once, and once only, as they moved toward the repast, did Lawton see a foot thrust itself from beneath the folds of her robe, and exhibit its little beauties encased in a slipper of blue silk, clasped close to the shape by a buckle of brilliants. The trooper caught himself sighing as he thought, though it was good for nothing in the stirrup, how enchantingly it would grace a minuet.

As the black appeared on the threshold of the room, making a low reverence, which has been interpreted for some centuries into "dinner waits," Mr. Wharton, clad in a dress of drab bedecked with enormous buttons, advanced formally to Miss Singleton, and bending his powdered

head nearly to the level of the hand he extended, received hers in return.

Dr. Sitgreaves offered the same homage to Miss Peyton, and met with equal favor; the lady first pausing to draw on her gloves.

Colonel Wellmere was honored with a smile from Sarah, while performing a similar duty; and Frances gave the ends of her taper fingers to Captain Lawton with maiden bashfulness.

Much time, and some trouble, were expended before the whole party were, to the great joy of Caesar, comfortably arranged around the table, with proper attention to all points of etiquette and precedence. The black well knew the viands were not improving; and though abundantly able to comprehend the disadvantage of eating a cold dinner, it greatly exceeded his powers of philosophy to weigh all the latent consequences to society which depend on social order.

For the first ten minutes all but the captain of dragoons found themselves in a situation much to their liking. Even Lawton would have been perfectly happy, had not excess of civility on the part of his host and Miss Jeanette Peyton kept him from the more agreeable occupation of tasting dishes he did want, in order to decline those he did not. At length, however, the repast was fairly commenced, and a devoted application to the viands was more eloquent than a thousand words in favor of Dinah's skill.

Next came drinking with the ladies; but as the wine was excellent, and the glasses ample, the trooper bore this interruption with consummate good-nature. Nay, so fearful was he of giving offense, and of omitting any of the nicer points of punctilio, that having commenced this courtesy with the lady who sat next him, he persevered until not one of his fair companions could, with justice, reproach him with partiality in this particular.

Long abstemiousness from anything like generous wine might plead the excuse of Captain Lawton, especially when exposed to so strong a temptation as that now before him. Mr. Wharton had been one of a set of politicians in New York,

whose principal exploits before the war had been to assemble, and pass sage opinions on the signs of the times, under the inspiration of certain liquor made from a grape that grew on the south side of the island of Madeira, and which found its way into the colonies of North America, through the medium of the West Indies, sojourning awhile in the Western Archipelago, by way of proving the virtues of the climate. A large supply of this cordial had been drawn from his storehouse in the city, and some of it now sparkled in a bottle before the captain, blushing in the rays of the sun, which were passing obliquely through it, like amber.

Though the meat and vegetables had made their entrance with perfect order and propriety, their exeunt was effected much in the manner of a retreat of militia. The point was to clear the board something after the fabled practice of the harpies, and by dint of scrambling, tossing, breaking and spilling, the remnants of the overflowing repast disappeared. And now another series of processions commenced, by virtue of which a goodly display of pastry, with its usual accompaniments, garnished the table.

Mr. Wharton poured out a glass of wine for the lady who sat on his right hand, and, pushing the bottle to a guest, said, with a low bow:

"We are to be honored with a toast from Miss Singleton."

Although there was nothing more in this movement than occurred every day on such occasions, yet the lady trembled, colored, and grew pale again, seemingly endeavoring to rally her thoughts, until, by her agitation, she had excited the interest of the whole party; when by an effort and in a manner as if she had in vain striven to think of another, Isabella said, faintly:

"Major Dunwoodie."

The health was drunk cheerfully by all but Colonel Wellmere, who wet his lips, and drew figures on the table with some of the liquor he had spilt.

At length Colonel Wellmere broke silence by saying aloud to Captain Lawton:

"I suppose, sir, this Mr. Dunwoodie will receive promotion in the rebel army for the advantage my misfortune gave him over my command."

The trooper had supplied the wants of nature to his perfect satisfaction; and, perhaps, with the exception of Washington and his immediate commander, there was no mortal whose displeasure he regarded a tittle. First helping himself, therefore, to a little of his favorite bottle, he replied, with admirable coolness:

"Colonel Wellmere, your pardon; Major Dunwoodie owes his allegiance to the Confederate States of North America, and where he owes it he pays it. Such a man is no rebel. Promoted I hope he may be, both because he deserves it, and because I am next in rank in the corps; and I know not what you call a misfortune, unless you deem meeting the Virginia Horse as such."

"We will not differ about terms, sir," said the colonel, haughtily; "I spoke as duty to my sovereign prompted; but do you not call the loss of a commander a misfortune to a party?"

"It certainly may be so," said the trooper, with emphasis.

"Miss Peyton, will you favor us with a toast?" cried the master of the house, anxious to stop this dialogue.

The lady bowed her head with dignity, as she named "General Montrose;" and the long-absent bloom stole lightly over her features.

"There is no term more doubtful than that word misfortune," said the surgeon, regardless of the nice maneuvers of the host; "some deem one thing a misfortune, others its opposite; misfortune begets misfortune; life is a misfortune, for it may be the means of enduring misfortune, and death is a misfortune, as it abridges the enjoyments of life."

"It is a misfortune that our mess has no such wine as this," interrupted the trooper.

"We will pledge you a sentiment in it, sir, as it seems to suit your taste," said Mr. Wharton.

Lawton filled to the brim, and drank, "A speedy peace or a stirring war."

"I drink your toast, Captain Lawton, though I greatly distrust your construction of activity," said the surgeon. "In my poor judgment, cavalry should be kept in the rear, to improve a victory, and not sent in front to gain it. Such may be said to be their natural occupation, if the term can be used in reference to so artificial a body; for all history shows that the horse have done most when properly held in reserve."

This dissertation, uttered in a sufficiently didactic manner, was a hint that Miss Peyton did not neglect. She arose and retired, followed by her juniors.

Nearly at the same moment Mr. Wharton and his son made an apology for their absence, which was required on account of the death of a near neighbor, and withdrew.

The retreat of the ladies was the signal for the appearance of the surgeon's cigar, which, being established in a corner of his mouth, in a certain knowing way, caused not the slightest interruption to his discourse.

"If anything can sweeten captivity and wounds, it must be the happiness of suffering in the society of the ladies who have left us," gallantly observed the colonel, as he resumed his seat, after closing the door.

"Sympathy and kindness have their influence on the human system," returned the surgeon, knocking the ashes from his cigar with the tip of a little finger, in the manner of an adept. "The connection is intimate between the moral and physical feelings; but still, to accomplish a cure, and restore nature to the healthy tone it has lost from disease or accident, requires more than can flow from unguided sympathies. In such cases, the lights"—the surgeon accidentally caught the eye of the trooper, and he paused. Taking two or three hasty puffs, he essayed to finish the sentence—"In such cases, the knowledge that flows from the lights—"

"You were saying, sir——" said Colonel Wellmere, sipping his wine.

"The purport of my remark went to say," continued Sitgreaves, turning his back on Lawton, "that a bread poultice would not set a broken arm."

"More is the pity," cried the trooper, "for next to eating, the nourishment could not be more innocently applied."

"To you, Colonel Wellmere," said the surgeon, "as a man of education, I can with safety appeal." The colonel bowed. "You must have observed the dreadful havoc made in your ranks by the men who were led by this gentleman;" the colonel looked grave again; "how, when blows lighted on their frames, life was invariably extinguished, beyond all hope of scientific reparation; how certain yawning wounds were inflicted that must set at defiance the art of the most experienced practitioner. Now, sir, to you I triumphantly appeal, therefore, to know whether your detachment would not have been as effectually defeated, if the men had all lost a right arm, for instance, as if they had all lost their heads."

"The triumph of your appeal is somewhat hasty, sir," said Wellmere.

"Is the cause of liberty advanced a step by such injudicious harshness in the field?" continued the surgeon, bent on the favorite principle of his life.

"I am yet to learn that the cause of liberty is in any manner advanced by the the services of any gentleman in the rebel army," rejoined the colonel.

"Not liberty! Good God, for what, then, are we contending?"

"Slavery, sir; yes, even slavery; you are putting the tyranny of a mob on the throne of a kind and lenient prince; where is the consistency of your boasted liberty?"

"Consistency!" repeated the surgeon, looking about him a little wildly, at hearing such sweeping charges against a cause he had so long thought holy.

"Ay, sir, your consistency. Your congress of sages have published a manifesto, wherein they set forth the equality of political rights."

"Tis true, and it is done most ably."

"I say nothing of its ability; but if true, why not set your slaves at liberty?" This argument, which is thought by most of the colonel's countrymen a triumphant answer to a thousand eloquent facts,

lost none of its weight by the manner in which it was uttered.

Every American feels humbled at the necessity of vindicating his country from the apparent inconsistency and injustice of the laws alluded to. His feelings are much like those of an honorable man who is compelled to exonerate himself from a disgraceful charge, although he may know the accusation to be false. At the bottom Sitgreaves had much good sense, and thus called on he took up the cudgels of argument in downright earnest.

"We deem it a liberty to have the deciding voice in the councils by which we are governed. We think it a hardship to be ruled by a king of a people who live at a distance of three thousand miles, and who cannot, and who do not, feel a single political interest in common with ourselves. I say nothing of oppression; the child was of age, and was entitled to the privileges of majority. In such cases there is but one tribunal to which to appeal for a nation's rights—it is power, and we now make the appeal."

"Such doctrine may suit your present purposes," said Wellmere, with a sneer; "but I apprehend it is opposed to all the opinions and practices of civilized nations."

"It is in conformity with the practices of all nations," said the surgeon, returning the nod and smile of Lawton, who enjoyed the good sense of his comrade as much as he disliked what he called "his medical talk." "Who would be ruled when he can rule? The only rational ground to take is, that every community has a right to govern itself, so that in no manner it violates the laws of God."

"And is holding your fellow-creatures in bondage in conformity to those laws?" asked the colonel, impressively.

The surgeon took another glass, and hemming once, returned to the combat.

"Sir," said he, "slavery is of very ancient origin, and it seems to have been confined to no particular religion or form of government; every nation of civilized Europe does, or has held their fellow-creatures in this kind of *duress*!"

"You will except Great Britain, sir," cried the colonel, proudly.

"No, sir," continued the surgeon, confidently, feeling that he was now carrying the war out of his own country; "I cannot except Great Britain. It was her children, her ships, and her laws that first introduced the practice into these states, and on her institutions the judgment must fall. There is not a foot of ground belonging to England, in which a negro would be useful, that has not its slave. England herself has none, but England is overflowing with physical force, a part of which she is obliged to maintain in the shape of paupers. The same is true of France, and most other European countries. So long as we were content to remain colonies, nothing was said of our system of domestic slavery; but now, when we are resolute to obtain as much freedom as the vicious system of metropolitan rule has left us, that which is England's gift has become our reproach. Will your master liberate the slaves of his subjects, should he succeed in subduing the new states, or will he condemn the whites to the same servitude as that in which he has been so long content to see the blacks? It is true, we continue the practice; but we must come gradually to the remedy or create an evil greater than that which we endure at present; doubtless, as we advance, the manumission of our slaves will accompany us, until happily these fair regions shall exist without a single image of the Creator that is held in a state which disqualifies him to judge of that Creator's goodness."

It will be remembered that Doctor Sitgreaves spoke forty years ago, and Wellmere was unable to contradict his prophetic assertion.

Finding the subject getting to be knotty, the Englishman retired to the apartment in which the ladies had assembled; and, seated by the side of Sarah, he found a more pleasing employment in relating the events of fashionable life in the metropolis, and in recalling the thousand little anecdotes of their former associates. Miss Peyton was a pleased listener, as she dis-

pensed the bounties of the tea-table; and Sarah frequently bowed her blushing countenance to her needle-work, as her face glowed at the flattering remarks of her companion.

The dialogue we have related established a perfect truce between the surgeon and his comrade; and the former having paid a visit to Singleton, they took their leave of the ladies, and mounted; the former to visit the wounded at the encampment, and the latter to rejoin his troop. But their movements were arrested at the gate by an occurrence that we shall relate in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

I see no more those white locks thinly spread
Round the bald polish of that honor'd head:
No more that meek, that suppliant look in prayer,
Nor that pure faith that gave it force, are there:
But he is blest, and I lament no more,
A wise good man, contented to be poor.

—CRABBE.

WE have already said that the customs of America leave the dead but a short time in the sight of the mourners; and the necessity for providing for his own safety had compelled the peddler to abridge even this brief space. In the confusion and agitation produced by the events we have recorded, the death of the elder Birch had occurred unnoticed; but a sufficient number of the immediate neighbors were hastily collected, and the ordinary rites of sepulture were now about to be paid to the deceased. It was the approach of this humble procession that arrested the movements of the trooper and his comrade. Four men supported the body on a rude bier; and four others walked in advance, ready to relieve their friends from their burden. The peddler walked next the coffin, and by his side moved Katy Haynes, with a most determined aspect of woe, and next to the mourners came Mr. Wharton and the English captain. Two or three old men and women, with a few straggling boys, brought up the rear. Captain Lawton sat in his saddle, in rigid silence, until the

bearers came opposite to his position, and then, for the first time, Harvey raised his eyes from the ground, and saw the enemy that he dreaded so near him. The first impulse of the peddler was certainly flight; but recovering his recollection, he fixed his eye on the coffin of his parent, and passed the dragoon with a firm step but swelling heart. The trooper slowly lifted his cap, and continued uncovered until Mr. Wharton and his son had moved by, when, accompanied by the surgeon, he rode leisurely in the rear, maintaining an inflexible silence.

Cæsar emerged from the cellar-kitchen of the cottage, and with a face of settled solemnity, added himself to the number of the followers of the funeral, though with an humble mien, and at a most respectful distance from the horsemen. The old negro had placed around his arm, a little above the elbow, a napkin of unsullied whiteness, it being the only time since his departure from the city that he had enjoyed an opportunity of exhibiting himself in the garniture of servile mourning. He was a great lover of propriety, and had been a little stimulated to this display by a desire to show his sable friend from Georgia all the decencies of a New York funeral; and the ebullition of his zeal went off very well, producing no other results than a mild lecture from Miss Peyton, at his return, on the fitness of things. The attendance of the black was thought well enough in itself; but the napkin was deemed a superfluous exhibition of ceremony, at the funeral of a man who had performed all the menial offices in his own person.

The graveyard was an enclosure on the grounds of Mr. Wharton, which had been fenced with stone and set apart for the purpose by that gentleman some years before. It was not, however, intended as a burial-place for any of his own family. Until the fire, which raged as the British troops took possession of New York, had laid Trinity in ashes, a goodly gilded tablet on its walls proclaimed the virtues of his deceased parents, and beneath a flag of marble, in one of the aisles of the church, their bones were left to molder

in aristocratical repose. Captain Lawton made a movement as if he was disposed to follow the procession when it left the highway to enter the field which contained the graves of the humble dead, but he was recalled to recollection by a hint from his companion that he was taking the wrong road.

"Of all the various methods which have been adopted by man for the disposal of his earthly remains, which do you prefer, Captain Lawton?" said the surgeon, as they separated from the little procession. "In some countries the body is exposed to be devoured by wild beasts; in others it is suspended in the air to exhale its substance in the manner of decomposition; in other regions it is consumed on the funeral pile, and again, it is inhumed in the bowels of the earth; every people have their own particular fashion; and to which do you give the preference?"

"All are agreeable," said the trooper, following the group they had left with his eyes; "though the speediest interments give the cleanest fields. Of which are you an admirer?"

"The last, as practiced by ourselves, for the other three are destructive of all the opportunities for dissection; whereas, in the last, the coffin can lie in peaceful decency, while the remains are made to subserve the useful purposes of science. Ah! Captain Lawton, I enjoy comparatively but few opportunities of such a nature to what I expected on entering the army."

"To what may these pleasures numerically amount in a year?" said the captain, withdrawing his gaze from the graveyard.

"Within a dozen, upon my honor; my best picking is when the corps is detached; for when we are with the main army there are so many boys to be satisfied that I seldom get a good subject. Those youngsters are as wasteful as prodigals and as greedy as vultures."

"A dozen!" echoed the trooper, in surprise; "why, I furnish you that number with my own hands."

"Ah! Jack," returned the doctor, approaching the subject with great tender-

ness of manner, "it is seldom I can do anything with your patients; you disfigure them woefully; believe me, John, when I tell you as a friend that your system is all wrong; you unnecessarily destroy life, and then you injure the body so that it is unfit for the only use that can be made of a dead man."

The trooper maintained a silence which he thought would be the most probable means of preserving peace between them; and the surgeon, turning his head from taking a last look at the burial, as they rode round the foot of the hill that shut the valley from their sight, continued, with a suppressed sigh:

"One might get a natural death from that graveyard to-night, if there was but time and opportunity! the patient must be the father of the lady we saw this morning."

"The petticoat doctor!—she with the *Aurora Borealis* complexion," said the trooper, with a smile that began to cause uneasiness to his companion; "but the lady was not the gentleman's daughter, only his medico-petticoat attendant, and the Harvey whose name was made to rhyme with every word in her song is the renowned peddler-spy."

"What! he who unhorsed you?"

"No man ever unhorsed me, Dr. Sitgreaves," said the dragoon, gravely; "I fell by a mischance of Roanoke; rider and beast kissed the earth together."

"A warm embrace, from the love-spots it left on your cuticle; 'tis a thousand pities that you cannot find where the tattling rascal lies hid."

"He followed his father's body."

"And you let him pass?" cried the surgeon, checking his horse; "let us return immediately and take him; to-morrow you shall have him hanged, Jack—and, damn him, I'll dissect him."

"Softly, softly, my dear Archibald; would you arrest a man while paying the last offices to a dead father? Leave him to me, and I pledge myself he shall have justice."

The doctor muttered his dissatisfaction at any postponement of vengeance, but he was compelled to acquiesce, from a regard

to his reputation for propriety; and they continued their ride to the quarters of the corps, engaged in various discussions concerning the welfare of the human body.

Birch supported the grave and collected manner that was thought becoming in a male mourner on such occasions, and to Katy was left the part of exhibiting the tenderness of the softer sex. There are some people whose feelings are of such a nature that they cannot weep unless it be in proper company, and the spinster was a good deal addicted to this congregational virtue. After casting her eyes around the small assemblage, the housekeeper found the countenances of the few females who were present fixed on her in solemn expectation, and the effect was instantaneous; the maiden really wept, and she gained no inconsiderable sympathy, and some reputation for a tender heart, from the spectators. The muscles of the peddler's face were seen to move, and as the first clod of earth fell on the tenement of his father, sending up that dull, hollow sound that speaks so eloquently the mortality of man, his whole frame was for an instant convulsed. He bent his body down, as if in pain, his fingers worked while the hands hung lifeless by his side, and there was an expression in his countenance that seemed to announce a writhing of the soul; but it was not unresisted, and it was transient. He stood erect, drew a long breath, and looked around him with an elevated face that even seemed to smile with a consciousness of having obtained the mastery. The grave was soon filled; a rough stone placed at either extremity marked its position, and the turf, whose faded vegetation was adapted to the fortunes of the deceased, covered the little hillock with the last office of seemliness. This office ended, the neighbors, who had officiously pressed forward to offer their services in performing this solemn duty, paused, and lifting their hats, stood looking toward the mourner, who now felt himself to be really alone in the world. Uncovering his head also, the peddler hesitated a moment to gather energy, and spoke.

"My friends and neighbors," he said,

"I thank you for assisting me to bury my dead out of my sight."

A solemn pause succeeded the customary address, and the group dispersed in silence, some few walking with the mourners back to their own habitation, but respectfully leaving them at its entrance. The peddler and Katy were followed into the building by one man, however, who was well known to the surrounding country by the significant term of "a speculator." Katy saw him enter with a heart that palpitated with dreadful forebodings, but Harvey civilly handed him a chair, and evidently was prepared for the visit. The peddler went to the door, and, taking a cautious glance about the valley, quickly returned and commenced the following dialogue:

"The sun has just left the top of the eastern hill; my time presses me; here is the deed for the house and lot; everything is done according to law."

The other took the paper, and conned its contents with a deliberation that proceeded partly from his caution, and partly from the unlucky circumstance of his education having been much neglected when a youth. The time occupied in this tedious examination was employed by Harvey in gathering certain articles, which he intended to include in the stores that were to leave the habitation with himself. Katy had already inquired of the peddler whether the deceased had left a will; and she saw the Bible placed in the bottom of a new pack, which she had made for his accommodation, with a most stoical indifference; but as the six silver spoons were laid carefully by its side, a sudden twinge of her conscience objected to such a palpable waste of property, and she broke silence.

"When you marry, Harvey, you may miss those spoons."

"I never shall marry."

"Well, if you don't, there's no occasion to make rash promises, even to yourself. One never knows what one may do in such a case. I should like to know of what use so many spoons can be to a single man; for my part, I think it is the duty of every man who is well provided

to have a wife and family to maintain."

At the time Katy expressed this sentiment, the fortune of women in her class of life consisted of a cow, a bed, the labors of her own hands in the shape of divers pillow-cases, blankets, and sheets, with, where fortune was unusually kind, a half-dozen silver spoons. The spinster herself had obtained all the other necessities by her own industry and prudence, and it can easily be imagined that she saw the articles she had long counted her own vanish in the enormous pack with a dissatisfaction that was in no degree diminished by the declaration that had preceded the act. Harvey, however, disregarded her opinions and feelings, and continued his employment of filling the pack, which soon grew to something like the ordinary size of the peddler's burden.

"I'm rather tiresome about this conveyance," said the purchaser, having at length waded through the covenants of the deed.

"Why so?"

"I'm afraid it won't stand good in law. I know that two of the neighbors leave home to-morrow morning, to have the place entered for confiscation; and if I should give forty pounds, and lose it all, 'twould be a dead pull-back to me."

"They can only take my right," said the peddler; "pay me two hundred dollars, and the house is yours; you are a well-known Whig, and you at least they won't trouble." As Harvey spoke, there was a strange bitterness of manner, mingled with the shrewd care he expressed concerning the sale of his property.

"Say one hundred, and it is a bargain," returned the man with a grin that he meant for a good-natured smile.

"A bargain!" echoed the peddler, in surprise; "I thought the bargain already made."

"Nothing is a bargain," said the purchaser, with a chuckle, "until papers are delivered and the money paid in hand."

"You have the paper."

"Ay, and will keep it, if you will excuse the money; come, say one hundred and

fifty, and I won't be hard; here—here is just the money."

The peddler looked from the window, and saw with dismay that the evening was fast advancing, and knew well that he endangered his life by remaining in the dwelling after dark; yet he could not tolerate the idea of being defrauded in this manner, in a bargain that had already been fairly made; he hesitated.

"Well," said the purchaser, rising, "mayhap you can find another man to trade with between this and morning; but, if you don't, your title won't be worth much afterward."

"Take it, Harvey," said Katy, who felt it impossible to resist a tender like the one before her; for the purchase-money was in English guineas. Her voice roused the peddler, and a new idea seemed to strike him.

"I agree to the price," he said; and, turning to the spinster, he placed part of the money in her hand, as he continued—"had I other means to pay you I would have lost all rather than have suffered myself to be defrauded of part."

"You may lose all yet," muttered the stranger, with a sneer, as he rose and left the building.

"Yes," said Katy, following him with her eyes; "he knows your failing, Harvey; he thinks with me, now the old gentleman has gone, you will want a careful body to take care of your concerns."

The peddler was busied in making arrangements for his departure, and he took no notice of this insinuation, while the spinster returned again to the attack. She had lived so many years in expectation of a termination to her hopes so different from that which now seemed likely to occur, that the idea of separation began to give her more uneasiness than she had thought herself capable of feeling about a man so destitute and friendless.

"Have you another house to go to?" inquired Katy.

"Providence will provide me with a home."

"Yes," said the housekeeper; "but maybe 'twill not be to your liking."

"The poor must not be difficult."

"I'm sure I'm anything but a difficult body," cried the spinster, very hastily; "but I love to see things becoming and in their places; yet I wouldn't be hard to persuade to leave this place myself. I can't say I altogether like the ways of the people hereabouts."

"The valley is lovely," said the peddler with fervor, "and the people like all the race of man. But to me it matters nothing; all places are now alike, and all faces equally strange;" as he spoke he dropped the article he was packing from his hand, and seated himself on a chest with a look of vacant misery.

"Not so, not so," said Katy, shoving her chair nearer to the place where the peddler sat; "not so, Harvey, you must know me at least; my face cannot be strange to you, certainly."

Birch turned his eyes slowly on her countenance, which exhibited more of feeling, and less of self, than he had ever seen there before; he took her hand kindly, and his own features lost some of their painful expression, as he said:

"Yes, good woman, you, at least, are not a stranger to me; you may do me partial justice; when others revile me, possibly your feelings may lead you to say something in my defense."

"That I will! that I would!" said Katy, eagerly; "I will defend you, Harvey, to the last drop; let me hear them that dare revile you! you say true, Harvey, I am partial and just to you; what if you do like the king? I have often heard it said he was at the bottom a good man; but there's no religion in the old country, for everybody allows the ministers are desperate bad!"

The peddler paced the floor in evident distress of mind; his eye had a look of wildness that Katy had never witnessed before, and his step was measured, with a dignity that appalled the housekeeper.

"While my father lived," murmured Harvey, unable to smother his feelings, "there was one who read my heart; and oh! what a consolation to return from my secret marches of danger, and the insults and wrongs that I suffered, to receive his blessing and his praise; but he is gone," he continued, stopping and gaz-

ing wildly toward the corner that used to hold the figure of his parent, "and who is there to do me justice?"

"Why, Harvey! Harvey!"

"Yes, there is one who will, who must know me before I die! Oh! it is dreadful to die, and leave such a name behind me."

"Don't talk of dying, Harvey," said the spinster, glancing her eyes around the room, and pushing the wood in the fire to obtain a light from the blaze.

The ebullition of feeling in the peddler was over. It had been excited by the events of the past day and a vivid perception of his sufferings. It was not long, however, that passion maintained an ascendancy over the reason of this singular man; and perceiving that the night had already thrown an obscurity around objects without doors, he hastily threw his pack over his shoulders, and taking Katy kindly by the hand, in leave-taking, said:

"It is painful to part with even you, good woman," he said; "but the hour has come, and I must go. What is left in the house is yours; to me it could be of no use, and it may serve to make you more comfortable. Farewell—we shall meet hereafter."

"In the regions of darkness," cried a voice that caused the peddler to sink on the chest from which he had risen in despair.

"What! another pack, Mr. Birch, and so well stuffed so soon!"

"Have you not done evil enough?" cried the peddler, regaining his firmness and springing on his feet with energy; "is it not enough to harass the last moments of a dying man; to impoverish me; what more would you have?"

"Your blood," said the Skinner, with cool malignity.

"And for money," cried Harvey, bitterly; "like the ancient Judas you would grow rich with the price of blood!"

"Ay! and a fair price it is, my gentleman; fifty guineas; nearly the weight of that scare-crow carcass of yours, in gold."

"Here," said Katy, promptly; "here are fifteen guineas, and these drawers and this bed are all mine; if you will give

Harvey but one hour's start from the door, they shall be yours."

"One hour?" said the Skinner, showing his teeth, and looking with a longing eye at the money.

"But a single hour; here, take the money."

"Hold!" cried Harvey; "put not faith in the miscreant."

"She may do what she pleases with her faith," said the Skinner, with malignant pleasure; "but I have the money in good keeping; as for you, Mr. Birch, we will bear your insolence, for the fifty guineas that are to pay for your gallows."

"Go on," said the peddler, proudly; "take me to Major Dunwoodie; he, at least, may be kind, although he may be just."

"I can do better than by marching so far in such disgraceful company; this Mr. Dunwoodie has let one or two Tories go at large; but the troop of Captain Lawton is quartered some half-mile nearer, and his receipt will get me the reward as soon as his major's; how relish you the idea of supping with Captain Lawton, this evening, Mr. Birch?"

"Give me my money, or set Harvey free," cried the spinster, in alarm.

"Your bribe was not enough, good woman, unless there is money in this bed;" thrusting his bayonet through the ticking, and ripping it for some distance, he took a malicious satisfaction in scattering its contents about the room.

"If," cried the housekeeper, losing sight of her personal danger in care for her newly acquired property, "there is law in the land, I will be righted."

"The law of the neutral ground is the law of the strongest; but your tongue is not as long as my bayonet; you had, therefore, best not set them at loggerheads, or you might be the loser."

A figure stood in the shadow of the door, as if afraid to be seen in the group of Skinners; but a blaze of light, raised by some articles thrown in the fire by his persecutors, showed the peddler the face of the purchaser of his little domain. Occasionally there was some whispering between this man and the Skinner nearest

him, that induced Harvey to suspect he had been the dupe of a contrivance in which that wretch had participated. It was, however, too late to repine; and he followed the party from the house with a firm and collected tread, as if marching to a triumph, and not to a gallows. In passing through the yard, the leader of the band fell over a billet of wood, and received a momentary hurt from the fall; exasperated at the incident, the fellow sprang on his feet, filling the air with execrations.

"The curse of heaven light on the log!" he exclaimed, "the night is too dark for us to move in; throw that brand of fire in yon pile of tow, to light up the scene."

"Hold!" roared the speculator; "you'll fire the house."

"And see the farther," said the other, hurling the brand in the midst of the combustibles. In an instant the building was in flames. "Come on; let us move toward the heights while we have light to pick our road."

"Villain!" cried the exasperated purchaser; "is this your friendship—this my reward for kidnapping the peddler?"

"'Twould be wise to move more from the light, if you mean to entertain us with abuse, or we may see too well to miss our mark," cried the leader of the gang. The next instant he was as good as his threat, but happily missed the terrified speculator and equally appalled spinster, who saw herself again reduced from comparative wealth to poverty, by the blow. Prudence dictated to the pair a speedy retreat; and the next morning the only remains of the dwelling of the peddler was the huge chimney we have already mentioned.

CHAPTER XV.

Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.

—MOOR OF VENICE.

THE weather, which had been mild and clear since the storm, now changed with the suddenness of an American climate. Toward evening the cold blasts poured

down from the mountains, and flurries of snow plainly indicated that the month of November had arrived; a season whose temperature varies from the heats of summer to the cold of winter. Frances had stood at the window of her own apartment, watching the slow progress of the funeral procession, with a melancholy that was too deep to be excited by the spectacle. There was something in the sad office that was in unison with her feelings. As she gazed around, she saw the trees bending to the force of the wind, that swept through the valley with an impetuosity that shook even the buildings; and the forest, that had solately glittered in the sun with its variegated hues, was fast losing its loveliness, as the leaves were torn from the branches, and were driving irregularly before the eddies of the blast. A few of the southern dragoons, who were patrolling the passes which led to the encampment of the corps, could be distinguished at a distance on the heights, bending to their pommels as they faced the keen air which had so lately traversed the great fresh water lakes, and drawing their watch-coats about them in tighter folds.

Frances witnessed the disappearance of the wooden tenement of the deceased, as it was slowly lowered from the light of day; and the sight added to the chilling weariness of the view. Captain Singleton was sleeping under the care of his own man, while his sister had been persuaded to take possession of her own room, for the purpose of obtaining the repose of which her last night's journeying had robbed her. The apartment of Miss Singleton communicated with the room occupied by the sisters, through a private door, as well as through the ordinary passage of the house; this door was partly open, and Frances moved towards it, with the benevolent intention of ascertaining the situation of her guest, when the surprised girl saw her whom she had thought to be sleeping, not only awake, but employed in a manner that banished all probability of present repose. The black tresses, that during the dinner had been drawn in close folds over the crown of the head, were now loosened, and fell in profusion

over her shoulders and bosom, imparting a slight degree of wildness to her countenance; the chilling white of her complexion was strongly contrasted with eyes of the deepest black, that were fixed in rooted attention on a picture she held in her hand. Frances hardly breathed, as she was enabled, by a movement of Isabella, to see that it was the figure of a man in the well-known dress of the Southern horse; but she gasped for breath, and instinctively laid her hand on her heart to quell its throbbings, as she thought she recognized the lineaments that were so deeply seated in her own imagination. Frances felt she was improperly prying into the sacred privacy of another; but her emotions were too powerful to permit her to speak, and she drew back to a chair, where she still retained a view of the stranger, from whose countenance she felt it to be impossible to withdraw her eyes.

Isabella was too much engrossed by her own feelings to discover the trembling figure of the witness to her actions, and she pressed the inanimate image to her lips with an enthusiasm that denoted the most intense passion. The expression of the countenance of the fair stranger was so changeable, and the transitions were so rapid, that Frances had scarcely time to distinguish the character of the emotion, before it was succeeded by another, equally powerful and equally attractive. Admiration and sorrow were, however, the preponderating passions; the latter was indicated by large drops that fell from her eyes on the picture, and which followed each other over her cheek at such intervals as seemed to pronounce the grief too heavy to admit of the ordinary demonstrations of sorrow. Every movement of Isabella was marked by an enthusiasm that was peculiar to her nature, and every passion in its turn triumphed in her breast. The fury of the wind as it whistled round the angles of the building was in consonance with those feelings, and she rose and moved to a window of her apartment. Her figure was now hid from the view of Frances, who was about to rise and approach her guest, when tones of a thrilling melody

chained her in breathless silence to the spot. The notes were wild, and the voice not powerful, but the execution exceeded anything that Frances had ever heard, and she stood endeavoring to stifle the sounds of her own gentle breathing, until the following song was concluded:

Cold blow the blasts o'er the tops of the mountain,
And bare is the oak on the hill;
Slowly the vapors exhale from the fountain,
And bright gleams the ice-border'd rill;
All nature is seeking its annual rest,
But the slumbers of peace have deserted my breast.

Long has the storm pour'd its weight on my nation,
And long have her brave stood the shock;
Long has our chieftain ennobled his station,
A bulwark on liberty's rock:—
Unlicensed ambition relaxes its toil,
Yet blighted affection represses my smile.

Abroad the wild fury of winter is lowering,
And leafless and drear is the tree;
But the vertical sun of the south appears pouring
Its fierce killing heats upon me:—
Without all the season's chill symptoms begin—
But the fire of passion is raging within.

Frances abandoned her whole soul to the suppressed melody of the music, though the language of the song expressed a meaning which, united with certain events of that and the preceding day, left a sensation of uneasiness in the bosom of the warm-hearted girl to which she had hitherto been a stranger. Isabella moved from the window as her last tones melted on the ear of her admiring listener, and, for the first time, her eye rested on the pallid face of the intruder. A glow of fire lighted the countenance of both at the same instant, and the blue eye of Frances met the brilliant black one of her guest for a single moment, and both fell in abashed confusion on the carpet; they advanced, however, until they met, and had taken each other's hand, before either ventured again to look her companion in the face.

"This sudden change in the weather, and perhaps the situation of my brother, have united to make me melancholy, Miss Wharton," said Isabella, in a low tone, and in a voice that trembled as she spoke.

"'Tis thought you have little to apprehend for your brother," said Frances, in the same embarrassed manner; "had you

seen him when he was brought in by Major Dunwoodie——”

Frances paused, with a feeling of conscious shame, for which she could not account; and, in raising her eyes, she saw Isabella studying her countenance with an earnestness that again drove the blood tumultuously to her temples.

“You were speaking of Dunwoodie,” said Isabella, faintly.

“He was with Captain Singleton.”

“Do you know Dunwoodie? have you seen him often?” Once more Frances ventured to look her guest in the face, and again she met the piercing eyes bent on her, as if to search her inmost heart, “Speak, Miss Wharton; is Major Dunwoodie known to you?”

“He is my relative,” said Frances, appalled at the manner of the other.

“A relative,” echoed Miss Singleton; “in what degree?—speak, Miss Wharton. I conjure you to speak.”

“Our parents were cousins,” faintly replied Frances.

“And he is to be your husband?” said the stranger, impetuously.

Frances felt shocked, and all her pride awakened, by this direct attack upon her feelings, and she raised her eyes from the floor to her interrogator a little proudly, when the pale cheek and quivering lip of Isabella removed her resentment in a moment.

“It is true! my conjecture is true; speak to me, Miss Wharton; I conjure you, in mercy to my feelings, to tell me—do you love Dunwoodie?” There was a plaintive earnestness in the voice of Miss Singleton that disarmed Frances of all resentment, and the only answer she could make was hiding her burning face between her hands as she sank back in a chair to conceal her confusion.

Isabella paced the floor in silence for several minutes, until she had succeeded in conquering the violence of her feelings, when she approached the place where Frances yet sat, endeavoring to exclude the eyes of her companion from reading the shame expressed in her countenance, and taking the hand of the other, she spoke with an evident effort at composure.

“Pardon me, Miss Wharton, if my ungovernable feelings have led me into impropriety; the powerful motive—the cruel reason—” she hesitated; Frances now raised her face, and their eyes once more met; they fell in each other’s arms, and laid their burning cheeks together. The embrace was long—was ardent and sincere—but neither spoke; and on separating, Frances retired to her own room without further explanation.

While this extraordinary scene was acting in the room of Miss Singleton, matters of great importance were agitated in the drawing-room. The disposition of the fragments of such a dinner as the one we have recorded was a task that required no little exertion and calculation. Notwithstanding several of the small game had nestled in the pocket of Captain Lawton’s man, and even the assistant of Dr. Sitgreaves had calculated the uncertainty of his remaining long in such good quarters, still there was more left, unconsumed, than the prudent Miss Peyton knew how to dispose of to advantage. Cæsar and his mistress had, therefore, a long and confidential communication on this important business; and the consequence was that Colonel Wellmere was left to the hospitality of Sarah Wharton. All the ordinary topics of conversation were exhausted, when the colonel, with a little of the uneasiness that is in some degree inseparable from conscious error, touched lightly on the transactions of the preceding day.

“We little thought, Miss Wharton, when I first saw this Mr. Dunwoodie in your house in Queen street, that he was to be the renowned warrior he has proved himself,” said Wellmere, endeavoring to smile away his chagrin.

“Renowned, when we consider the enemy he overcame,” said Sarah, with consideration for her companion’s feelings. “’Twas most unfortunate, indeed, in every respect, that you met with the accident, or doubtless the royal arms would have triumphed in their usual manner.”

“And yet the pleasure of such society as this accident has introduced me to would more than repay the pain of a mor-

tified spirit and wounded body," added the colonel, in a manner of peculiar softness.

"I hope the latter is but trifling," said Sarah, stooping to hide her blushes under the pretext of biting a thread from the work on her knee.

"Trifling, indeed, compared to the former," returned the colonel, in the same manner. "Ah! Miss Wharton, it is in such moments that we feel the full value of friendship and sympathy."

Those who have never tried it cannot easily imagine what a rapid progress a warm-hearted female can make in love, in the short space of half an hour, particularly where there is a predisposition to the distemper. Sarah found the conversation, when it began to touch on friendship and sympathy, too interesting to venture her voice with a reply. She, however, turned her eyes on the colonel, and saw him gazing at her fine face with an admiration that was quite as manifest, and much more soothing, than any words could make it.

Their *tête-à-tête* was uninterrupted for an hour; and although nothing that would be called decided, by an experienced matron, was said by the gentleman, he uttered a thousand things that delighted his companion, who retired to her rest with a lighter heart than she had felt since the arrest of her brother by the Americans.

CHAPTER XVI.

And let me the canakin clink, clink,
And let me the canakin clink,
A soldier's a man;
A life's but a span;
Why then, let a soldier drink.

—LAGO.

THE position held by the corps of dragoons, we have already said, was a favorite place of halting with their commander. A cluster of some half-dozen small and dilapidated buildings formed what, from the circumstance of two roads intersecting each other at right angles, was called the village of the Four Corners. As usual, one of the most imposing of these edifices had been termed, in the language of the

day, "a house of entertainment for man and beast." On a rough board suspended from a gallows-looking post, that had supported the ancient sign, was, however, written in red chalk, "*Elizabeth Flanagan, her hotel*," an ebullition of the wit of some of the idle wags of the corps. The matron, whose name had thus been exalted to an office of such unexpected dignity, ordinarily discharged the duties of a female sutler, washerwoman, and, to use the language of Katy Haynes, petticoat doctor to the troops. She was the widow of a soldier who had been killed in the service, and who, like herself, was a native of a distant island, and had early tried his fortune in the colonies of North America. She constantly migrated with the troops; and it was seldom that they became stationary for two days at a time but the little cart of the bustling woman was seen driving into the encampment, loaded with such articles as she conceived would make her presence most welcome.

With a celerity that seemed almost supernatural, Betty took up her ground, and commenced her occupation. Sometimes the cart itself was her shop; at others the soldiers made her a rude shelter of such materials as offered; on the present occasion, she had seized on a vacant building, and, by dint of stuffing the dirty breeches and half-dried linen of the troopers into the broken windows, to exclude the cold, which had now become severe, she formed, what she herself had pronounced to be "most illigant lodgings." The men were quartered in the adjacent barns, and the officers collected in the "Hotel Flanagan," as they facetiously called headquarters. Betty was well-known to every trooper in the corps, could call each by his Christian or nickname, as best suited her fancy; and, although absolutely intolerable to all whom habit had not made familiar with her virtues, was a general favorite with these partisan warriors. Her faults were, a trifling love of liquor, excessive filthiness, and a total disregard of the decencies of language; her virtues, an unbounded love for her adopted country, perfect honesty when dealing on certain known principles with the soldiery,

and great good-nature. Added to these, Betty had the merit of being the inventor of that beverage which is so well known, at the present hour, to all the patriots who make a winter's march between the commercial and political capitals of this great State, and which is distinguished by the name of "cocktail." Elizabeth Flanagan was peculiarly well qualified, by education and circumstances, to perfect this improvement in liquors, having been literally brought up on its principal ingredient, and having acquired from her Virginian customers the use of mint, from its flavor in a julep to its height of renown in the article in question. Such, then, was the mistress of the mansion, who, reckless of the cold northern blasts, showed her blooming face from the door of the building to welcome the arrival of her favorite, Captain Lawton, and his companion, her master in matters of surgery.

"Ah! by my hopes of promotion, my gentle Elizabeth, but you are welcome!" cried the trooper, as he threw himself from his saddle; "this villainous fresh water gas from the Canadas has been whistling among my bones till they ache with the cold, but the sight of your fiery countenance is as cheering as a Christmas fire."

"Now sure, Captain Jack, yee's always full of your complimentaries," replied the sutler taking the bridle of her customer; "but hurry in for the life of you, darling; the fences hereabouts are not so strong as in the Highlands, and there's that within will warm both sowl and body."

"So you have been laying the rails under contribution, I see; well, that may do for the body," said the captain, coolly; "but I have had a pull at a bottle of cut-glass with a silver stand, and I doubt my relish for your whiskey for a month to come."

"If it's silver or goold that yee'r thinking of, it's but little I have, though I've a trifling bit of the continental," said Betty, with a look of humor; "but there's that within that's fit to be put in vessels of di'monds."

"What can she mean, Archibald?" asked Lawton; "the animal looks as if it meant more than it says?"

"'Tis probably a wandering of reasoning powers, created by the frequency of intoxicating draughts," observed the surgeon, as he deliberately threw his left leg over the pommel of the saddle, and slid down on the right side of his horse.

"Faith, my dear jewel of a doctor, but it was this side I was expicting you; the whole corps came down on this side but yeerself," said Betty, winking at the trooper; "but I've been feeding the wounded in yeer absence with the fat of the land."

"Barbarous stupidity!" cried the panic-stricken physician, "to feed men laboring under the excitement of fever with a powerful nutriment; woman, woman, you are enough to defeat the skill of Hippocrates!"

"Pooh!" said Betty, with infinite composure, "what a botheration yee make about a little whiskey; there was but a gallon betwixt a good two dozen of them, and I gave it to the boys to make them sleep asy; sure, jist as slumbering drops."

Lawton and his companion now entered the building, and the first objects which met their eyes explained the hidden meaning of Betty's comfortable declaration. A long table, made of boards torn from the side of an out-building, was stretched through the middle of the largest apartment, or the bar-room, and on it was a very scanty display of crockery ware. The steams of cookery arose from an adjoining kitchen, but the principal attraction was in a demijohn of fair proportions, which had been ostentatiously placed on high by Betty as the object most worthy of notice. Lawton soon learned that it was teeming with the real amber-colored juice of the grape, and had been sent from the Locusts as an offering to Major Dunwoodie, from his friend Captain Wharton, of the royal army.

"And a royal gift it is," said the grinning subaltern who made the explanation. "The major gives us an entertainment in honor of our victory, and you see the principal expense is borne, as it should be, by the enemy. Zounds, I am thinking that after we have primed with such stuff, we could charge through Sir Henry's"

headquarters, and carry off the knight himself."

The captain of dragoons was in no manner displeased at the prospect of terminating so pleasantly a day that had been so agreeably commenced. He was soon surrounded by his comrades, who made many eager inquiries concerning his adventures, while the surgeon proceeded, with certain quakings of the heart, to examine into the state of his wounded. Enormous fires were snapping in the chimneys of the house, superseding the necessity of candles by the bright light which was thrown from the blazing piles. The group within were all young men, and tried soldiers; in number they were rather more than a dozen, and their manners and conversation were a strange mixture of the bluntness of the partisan with the manners of gentlemen. Their dresses were neat, though plain; and a never-failing topic among them was the performance and quality of their horses. Some were endeavoring to sleep on the benches which lined the walls, some were walking the apartments, and others were seated in earnest discussion on subjects connected with the business of their lives. Occasionally, as the door of the kitchen opened, the hissing sounds of the frying-pans and the inviting savor of the food created a stagnation in all other employments; even the sleepers at such moments would open their eyes and raise their heads to reconnoiter the state of the preparations. All this time Dunwoodie sat by himself, gazing at the fire, and lost in reflections which none of his officers presumed to disturb. He had made earnest inquiries of Sitgreaves after the condition of Singleton, during which a profound and respectful silence was maintained in the room; but as soon as he had ended and resumed his seat the usual ease and freedom prevailed.

The arrangement of the table was a matter of but little concern to Mrs. Flanagan; and Cæsar would have been sadly scandalized at witnessing the informality with which various dishes, each bearing a wonderful resemblance to the others, were placed before so many gentlemen of con-

sideration. In taking their places at the board, the strictest attention was paid to precedency; for, notwithstanding the freedom of manners which prevailed in the corps, the points of military etiquette were at all times observed with something approaching to religious veneration. Most of the guests had been fasting too long to be in any degree fastidious in their appetites; but the case was different with Captain Lawton; he felt an unaccountable loathing at the exhibition of Betty's food, and could not refrain from making a few passing comments on the condition of the knives, and the clouded aspects of the plates. The good-nature and the personal affection of Betty for the offender refrained her, from some time, from answering his innuendoes, until Lawton, having ventured to admit a piece of the black meat into his mouth, inquired, with the affectation of a spoiled child:

"What kind of an animal might this have been when living, Mrs. Flanagan?"

"Sure, captain, and wasn't it the ould cow," replied the sutler, with a warmth that proceeded partly from dissatisfaction at the complaints of her favorite, and partly from grief at the loss of the deceased.

"What?" roared the trooper, stopping short as he was about to swallow the morsel, "ancient Jenny!"

"The devil!" cried another, dropping his knife and fork, "she who made the campaign of the Jerseys with us?"

"The very same," replied the mistress of the hotel, with a piteous aspect of woe; "a gentle baste, and one that could and did live on less than air, at need. Sure, gentlemen, 'tis awful to have to eat sich an ould friend."

"And has she sunk to this?" asked Lawton, pointing with his knife to the remains on the table.

"Nay, captain," said Betty, with spirit, "I sould two of her quarters to some of your troop; but divil the word did I tell the boys what an ould friend it was they had bought, for fear it might damage their appetites."

"Fury!" cried the trooper, with affected anger, "I shall have my fellows as

limber as supple-jacks on such fare ; afraid of an Englishman as a Virginia negro is of his driver."

"Well," said Lieutenant Mason, dropping his knife and fork in a kind of despair ; "my jaws have more sympathy than many men's hearts. They absolutely decline making any impression on the relics of their old acquaintance."

"Try a drop of the gift," said Betty, soothingly, pouring a large allowance of the wine into a bowl, and drinking it off as taster to the corps. "Faith, 'tis but a wishy-washy sort of stuff after all!"

The ice once broken, however, a clear glass of wine was handed to Dunwoodie, who, bowing to his companions, drank the liquor in the midst of a profound silence. For a few glasses there was much formality observed, and sundry patriotic toasts and sentiments were duly noticed by the company. The liquor, however, performed its wonted office ; and before the second sentinel at the door had been relieved, all recollection of the dinner and their cares was lost in the present festivity. Dr. Sitgreaves did not return in season to partake of Jenny, but he was in time to receive his fair proportion of Captain Wharton's present.

"A song, a song from Captain Lawton!" cried two or three of the party in a breath, on observing the failure of some of the points of good-fellowship in the trooper ; "silence, for the song of Captain Lawton."

"Gentlemen," returned Lawton, his dark eyes swimming with the bumpers he had finished, though his head was as impenetrable as a post ; "I am not much of a nightingale, but, under the favor of your good wishes, I consent to comply with the demand."

"Now, Jack," said Sitgreaves, nodding on his seat, "remember the air I taught you, and—stop, I have a copy of the words in my pocket."

"Forbear, forbear, good doctor," said the trooper, filling his glass with great deliberation ; "I never could wheel round these hard names. Gentlemen, I will give you an humble attempt of my own."

"Silence, for Captain Lawton's song!"

roared five or six at once, when the trooper proceeded, in a fine, full tone, to sing the following words to a well-known bacchanalian air, several of his comrades helping him through the chorus with a fervor that shook the crazy edifice they were in—

Now push the mug, my jolly boys,
And live, while live we can,
To-morrow's sun may end your joys,
For brief's the hour of man.
And he who bravely meets the foe
His lease of life can never know.

Old mother Flanagan,
Come and fill the can again ;
For you can fill, and we can swill,
Good Betty Flanagan.

If love of life pervades your breast,
Or love of ease your frame,
Quit honor's path for peaceful rest,
And bear a coward's name.
For soon and late, we danger know,
And fearless on the saddle go.
Old mother, etc.

When foreign foes invade the land,
And wives and sweethearts call ;
In freedom's cause we'll bravely stand,
Or will as bravely fall.
In this fair home the fates have given,
We'll live as lords, or live in heaven.
Old mother, etc.

At each appeal made to herself, by the united voices of the choir, Betty invariably advanced and complied literally with the request contained in the chorus, to the infinite delight of the singers, and with no small participation in the satisfaction on her own account. The hostess was provided with a beverage more suited to the high seasoning to which she had accustomed her palate, than the tasteless present of Captain Wharton ; by which means Betty had managed, with tolerable facility, to keep even pace with the exhilaration of her guests. The applause received by Captain Lawton was general, with the exception of the surgeon, who rose from the bench during the first chorus, and paced the floor, in a flow of classical indignation. The bravos and bravissimos drowned all other noises for a short time ; but as they gradually ceased, the doctor turned to the musician, and exclaimed with heat :

"Captain Lawton, I marvel that a gen-

tleman, and a gallant officer, can find no other subject for his muse, in these times of trial, than in such beastly invocations to that notorious follower of the camp, the filthy Elizabeth Flanagan. Methinks the goddess of Liberty could furnish a more noble inspiration, and the sufferings of your country a more befitting theme."

"Heydey!" shouted the hostess, advancing toward him in a threatening attitude; "and who is it that calls me filthy? Master Squirt! Master pop-gun——"

"Peace!" said Dunwoodie, in a voice that was exerted but a little more than common, but which was succeeded by the stillness of death; "woman, leave the room. Dr. Sitgreaves, I call you to your seat to wait the order of the revels."

"Proceed, proceed," said the surgeon, drawing himself up in an attitude of dignified composure; "I trust, Major Dunwoodie, I am not unacquainted with the rules of decorum, nor ignorant of the by-laws of good-fellowship." Betty made a hasty but somewhat devious retreat to her own dominions, being unaccustomed to dispute the orders of the commanding officer.

"Major Dunwoodie will honor us with a sentimental song," said Lawton, bowing to his leader with the collected manner he so well knew how to assume.

The major hesitated a moment and then sang, with fine execution, the following words—

Some love the heats of southern suns,
Where life's warm current maddening runs,
In one quick circling stream;
But dearer far's the mellow light
Which trembling shines, reflected bright
In Luna's milder beam.

Some love the tulip's gaudier dyes,
Where deepening blue with yellow vies,
And gorgeous beauty glows;
But happier he, whose bridal wreath,
By love entwined, is found to breathe
The sweetness of the rose.

The voice of Dunwoodie never lost its authority with his inferiors; and the applause which followed his song, though by no means so riotous as that which succeeded the effort of the captain, was much more flattering.

"If, sir," said the doctor, after joining

in the plaudits of his companions, "you would but learn to unite classical allusions with your delicate imagination, you would become a pretty amateur poet."

"He who criticises ought to be able to perform," said Dunwoodie, with a smile. "I call on Dr. Sitgreaves for a specimen of the style he admires."

"Dr. Sitgreaves' song! Dr. Sitgreaves' song!" echoed all at the table with delight; "a classical ode from Dr. Sitgreaves!"

The surgeon made a complacent bow, took the remnant of his glass, and gave a few preliminary hems, that served hugely to delight three or four young cornets at the foot of the table. He then commenced singing, in a cracked voice, and to anything but a tune, the following ditty—

Hast thou ever felt love's dart, dearest,
Or breathed his trembling sigh—
Thought him, afar, was ever nearest,
Before that sparkling eye?
Then hast thou known what 'tis to feel
The pain that Galen could not heal.

"Hurrah!" shouted Lawton; "Archibald eclipses the muses themselves; his words flow like the sylvan stream by moonlight, and his melody is a cross-breed of the nightingale and the owl."

"Captain Lawton," cried the exasperated operator, "it is one thing to despise the lights of classical learning, and another to be despised for your own ignorance!"

A loud summons at the door of the building created a dead halt in the uproar, and the dragoons instinctively caught up their arms to be prepared for the worst. The door was opened, and the Skinners entered, dragging in the peddler, bending beneath the load of his pack.

"Which is Captain Lawton?" said the leader of the gang, gazing around him in some little astonishment.

"He waits your pleasure," said the trooper, dryly.

"Then here I deliver to your hands a condemned traitor; this is Harvey Birch, the peddler-spy."

Lawton started as he looked his old acquaintance in the face, and turning to

the Skinner with a lowering look, he asked :

"And who are you, sir, that speak so freely of your neighbors? But," bowing to Dunwoodie, "your pardon, sir; here is the commanding officer; to him you will please address yourself."

"No," said the man sullenly, "it is to you I deliver the peddler, and from you I claim my reward."

"Are you Harvey Birch?" said Dunwoodie, advancing with an air of authority that instantly drove the Skinner to a corner of the room.

"I am," said Birch, proudly.

"And a traitor to your country," continued the major, with sternness; "do you know that I should be justified in ordering your execution this night?"

"'Tis not the will of God to call a soul so hastily to his presence," said the peddler, with solemnity.

"You speak the truth," said Dunwoodie; "and a few brief hours shall be added to your life. But as your offense is most odious to a soldier, so it will be sure to meet a soldier's vengeance; you die to-morrow."

"'Tis as God wills."

"I have spent many a good hour to entrap the villain," said the Skinner, advancing a little from his corner, "and I hope you will give me a certificate that will entitle us to the reward."

"Major Dunwoodie," said the officer of the day, entering the room, "the patrols report a house to be burnt near yesterday's battle-ground."

"'Twas the hut of the peddler," muttered the leader of the gang; "we have not left him a shingle for shelter; I should have burnt it months ago, but I wanted his shed for a trap to catch the sly fox in."

"You seem a most ingenious patriot," said Lawton. "Major Dunwoodie, I second the request of this worthy gentleman, and crave the office of bestowing the reward on him and his fellows."

"Take it;—and you, miserable man, prepare for the fate which will surely befall you before the setting of to-morrow's sun."

"Life offers but little to tempt me with," said Harvey, slowly raising his eyes, and gazing wildly at the strange faces in the apartment.

"Come, worthy children of America!" said Lawton, "follow and receive your reward."

The gang eagerly accepted the invitation, and followed the captain toward the quarters assigned to his troop. Dunwoodie paused a moment, from reluctance to triumph over a fallen foe, before he proceeded.

"You have already been tried, Harvey Birch; and the truth has proved you to be an enemy too dangerous to the liberties of America to be suffered to live."

"The truth!" echoed the peddler, starting, and raising himself in a manner that disregarded the weight of his pack.

"Ay! the truth: you were charged with loitering near the continental army to gain intelligence of its movements, and, by communicating them to the enemy, to enable him to frustrate the intentions of Washington."

"Will Washington say so, think you?"

"Doubtless he would; even the justice of Washington condemns you."

"No, no, no," cried the peddler, in a voice and with a manner that startled Dunwoodie; "Washington can see beyond the hollow views of pretended patriots. Has he not risked his all on the cast of a die? If the gallows is ready for me, was there not one for him also? No, no, no, no—Washington would never say, 'Lead him to the gallows.'"

"Have you anything, wretched man, to urge to the commander-in-chief why you should not die?" said the major, recovering from the surprise created by the manner of the other.

Birch trembled, for violent emotions were contending in his bosom. His face assumed the ghastly paleness of death, and his hand drew a box of tin from the folds of his shirt; he opened it, showing by the act that it contained a small piece of paper; on this document his eye was for an instant fixed—he had already held it toward Dunwoodie when, suddenly withdrawing his hand, he exclaimed—

"No—it dies with me ; I know the conditions of my service, and will not purchase life with their forfeiture—it dies with me."

"Deliver that paper and you may possibly find favor," cried Dunwoodie, expecting a discovery of importance to the cause.

"It dies with me," repeated Birch, a flush passing over his pallid features, and lighting them with extraordinary brilliancy.

"Seize the traitor !" cried the major, "and wrest the secret from his hands."

The order was immediately obeyed ; but the movements of the peddler were too quick ; in an instant he swallowed the paper. The officers paused in astonishment ; but the surgeon cried eagerly :

"Hold him, while I administer an emetic."

"Forbear !" said Dunwoodie, beckoning him back with his hand ; "if the crime is great, so will the punishment be heavy."

"Lead on," cried the peddler, dropping his pack from his shoulders, and advancing toward the door with a manner of incomprehensible dignity.

"Whither ?" asked Dunwoodie, in amazement.

"To the gallows."

"No," said the major, recoiling in horror at his own justice. "My duty requires that I order you to be executed, but surely not so hastily ; take until nine to-morrow to prepare for the awful change."

Dunwoodie whispered his orders in the ear of a subaltern, and motioned to the peddler to withdraw. The interruption caused by this scene prevented further enjoyment around the table, and the officers dispersed to their several places of rest. In a short time the only noise to be heard was the heavy tread of the sentinel, as he paced the frozen ground in front of the Hotel Flanagan.

CHAPTER XVII.

—"There are, whose changing lineaments Express each guileless passion of the breast, Where Love and Hope, and tender-hearted Pity Are seen reflected, as from a mirror's face ; But cold experience can veil these hues With looks, invented shrewdly to encompass The cunning purposes of base deceit."—DUO.

THE officer to whose keeping Dunwoodie had committed the peddler transferred his charge to the custody of the regular sergeant of the guard. The gift of Captain Wharton had not been lost on the youthful lieutenant ; and a certain dancing motion that had taken possession of objects before his eyes, gave him warning of the necessity of recruiting nature by sleep. After admonishing the non-commissioned guardian of Harvey to omit no watchfulness in securing the prisoner, the youth wrapped himself in his cloak, and stretched on a bench before a fire, soon found the repose he needed. A rude shed extended the whole length of the rear of the building, and from off one of its ends had been partitioned a small apartment, that was intended as a repository for many of the lesser implements of husbandry. The lawless times had, however, occasioned its being stripped of everything of value ; and the searching eyes of Betty Flanagan selected this spot, on her arrival as the storehouse for her movables, and a sanctuary for her person. The spare arms and baggage of the corps had also been deposited here, and the united treasures were placed under the eye of the sentinel who paraded the shed as a guardian of the rear of the headquarters.

A second soldier, who was stationed near the house to protect the horses of the officers, could command a view of the outside of the apartment ; and, as it was without window or outlet of any kind, excepting its door, the considerate sergeant thought this the most befitting place in which to deposit his prisoner until the moment of his execution. Several inducements urged Sergeant Hollister to this determination, among which was the absence of the washerwoman, who lay before the kitchen fire, dreaming that the corps was attacking a party of the enemy,

and mistaking the noise that proceeded from her own nose for the bugles of the Virginians sounding the charge. Another was the peculiar opinion that the veteran entertained of life and death, and by which he was distinguished in the corps as a man of most exemplary piety and holiness of life. The sergeant was more than fifty years of age, and for half that period he had borne arms. The constant recurrence of sudden deaths before his eyes had produced an effect on him differing greatly from that which was the usual moral consequence of such scenes; and he had become not only the most steady, but the most trustworthy soldier in his troop. Captain Lawton had rewarded his fidelity by making him its orderly.

Followed by Birch, the sergeant proceeded in silence to the door of the intended prison, and, throwing it open with one hand, he held a lantern with the other to light the peddler to his prison. Seating himself on a cask that contained some of Betty's favorite beverage, the sergeant motioned to Birch to occupy another in the same manner. The lantern was placed on the floor, when the dragoon, after looking his prisoner steadily in the face, observed :

"You look as if you would meet death like a man; and I have brought you to a spot where you can tranquilly arrange your thoughts, and be quiet and undisturbed."

"'Tis a fearful place to prepare for the last change in," said Harvey, gazing around his little prison with a vacant eye.

"Why, for the matter of that," returned the veteran, "it can reckon but little, in the great account, where a man parades his thoughts for the last review, so that he finds them fit to pass the muster of another world. I have a small book here, which I make it a point to read a little in whenever we are about to engage, and I find it a great strengthener in time of need." While speaking he took a Bible from his pocket and offered it to the peddler. Birch received the volume with habitual reverence; but there was an abstracted air about him and a wan-

dering of the eye that induced his companion to think that alarm was getting the mastery of the peddler's feelings; accordingly, he proceeded in what he conceived to be the offices of consolation.

"If anything lies heavy on your mind, now is the best time to get rid of it—if you have done any wrong to any one, I promise you, on the word of an honest dragoon, to lend you a helping hand to see them righted."

"There are few who have not done so," said the peddler, turning his vacant gaze once more on his companion.

"True—'tis natural to sin—but it sometimes happens that a man does what at other times he may be sorry for. One would not wish to die with any very heavy sin on his conscience, after all."

Harvey had by this time thoroughly examined the place in which he was to pass the night, and saw no means of escape. But as hope is ever the last feeling to desert the human breast, the peddler gave the dragoon more of his attention, fixing on his sunburnt features such searching looks that Sergeant Hollister lowered his eyes before the wild expression which he met in the gaze of his prisoner.

"I have been taught to lay the burden of my sins at the feet of my Saviour," replied the peddler.

"Why—yes, all that is well enough," returned the other; "but justice should be done while there is opportunity. There have been stirring times in this country since the war began, and many have been deprived of their rightful goods. I oftentimes find it hard to reconcile even my lawful plunder to a tender conscience."

"These hands," said the peddler, stretching forth his meager, bony fingers, "have spent years in toil, but not a moment in pilfering."

"It is well that it is so," said the honest-hearted soldier; "and, no doubt, you now feel it a great consolation. There are three great sins, that, if a man can keep his conscience clear of, why, by the mercy of God, he may hope to pass muster with the saints in heaven; they are stealing, murdering, and desertion."

"Thank God!" said Birch, with fervor,

"I have never yet taken the life of a fellow-creature."

"As to killing a man in lawful battle, that is no more than doing one's duty. If the cause is wrong, the sin of such a deed, you know, falls on the nation, and a man receives his punishment here with the rest of the people; but murdering in cold blood stands next to desertion as a crime in the eye of God."

"I never was a soldier, therefore never could desert," said the peddler, resting his face on his hand in a melancholy attitude.

"Why, desertion consists of more than quitting your colors, though that is certainly the worst kind; a man may desert his country in the hour of need."

Birch buried his face in both his hands, and his whole frame shook; the sergeant regarded him closely, but good feelings soon got the better of his antipathies, and he continued, more mildly:

"But still that is a sin which I think may be forgiven, if sincerely repented of; and it matters but little when or how a man dies, so that he dies like a Christian and a man. I recommend you to say your prayers, and then to get some rest, in order that you may do both. There is no hope of your being pardoned; for Colonel Singleton has sent down the most positive orders to take your life whenever we met you. No—no—nothing can save you."

"You say the truth," cried Birch. "It is now too late—I have destroyed my only safeguard. But *he* will do my memory justice at least."

"What safeguard?" asked the sergeant, with awakened curiosity.

"'Tis nothing," replied the peddler, recovering his natural manner, and lowering his face to avoid the earnest looks of his companion.

"And who is he?"

"No one," added Harvey, anxious to say no more.

"Nothing, and no one, can avail but little now," said the sergeant, rising to go; "lay yourself on the blanket of Mrs. Flanagan, and get a little sleep; I will call you betimes in the morning; and from the bottom of my soul, I wish I

could be of some service to you, for I dislike greatly to see a man hung up like a dog."

"Then *you* might save me from this ignominious death," said Birch, springing to his feet, and catching the dragoon by the arm—"And, oh! what will I not give you in reward!"

"In what manner?" asked the sergeant, looking at him in surprise.

"See," said the peddler, producing several guineas from his person; "these are nothing to what I will give you, if you will assist me to escape."

"Were you the man whose picture is on the gold, I would not listen to such a crime," said the trooper, throwing the money on the floor with contempt. "Go—poor wretch, and make your peace with God; for it is he only that can be of service to you now."

The sergeant took up the lantern, and, with some indignation in his manner, he left the peddler to sorrowful meditations on his approaching fate. Birch sank, in momentary despair, on the pallet of Betty, while his guardian proceeded to give necessary instructions to the sentinels for his safe-keeping.

Hollister concluded his injunctions to the man in the shed by saying, "Your life will depend on his not escaping. Let none enter or quit the room till the morning."

"But," said the trooper, "my orders are to let the washerwoman pass in and out as she pleases."

"Well, let her, then; but be careful that this wily peddler does not get out in the folds of her petticoats." He then continued on his walk, giving similar orders to each of the sentinels near the spot.

For some time after the departure of the sergeant silence prevailed within the solitary prison of the peddler, until the dragoon at his door heard his loud breathings, which soon rose into the regular cadence of one in a deep sleep. The man continued walking his post, musing on an indifference to life which could allow nature its customary rest, even on the threshold of the grave. Harvey Birch had, however, been a name too

long held in detestation by every man in the corps to suffer any feelings of commiseration to mingle with these reflections of the sentinel; for, notwithstanding the consideration and kindness manifested by the sergeant, there probably was not another man of his rank in the whole party who would have discovered equal benevolence to the prisoner, or who would not have imitated the veteran in rejecting the bribe, although probably from a less worthy motive. There was something of disappointed vengeance in the feelings of the man who watched the door of the room, on finding his prisoner enjoying a sleep of which he himself was deprived, and at his exhibiting such obvious indifference to the utmost penalty that military rigor could inflict on all his treason to the cause of liberty and America. More than once he felt prompted to disturb the repose of the peddler by taunts and revilings; but the discipline he was under, and a secret sense of shame at the brutality of the act, held him in subjection.

His meditations were, however, soon interrupted by the appearance of the wash-erwoman, who came staggering through the door that communicated with the kitchen, muttering execrations against the servants of the officers who, by their waggery, had disturbed her slumbers before the fire. The sentinel understood enough of her maledictions to comprehend the case; but all his efforts to enter into conversation with the enraged woman were useless, and he suffered her to enter her room without explaining that it contained another inmate. The noise of her huge frame falling on the bed was succeeded by a silence that was soon interrupted by the renewed respiration of the peddler, and within a few minutes Harvey continued to breathe aloud, as if no interruption had occurred. The relief arrived at this moment. The sentinel, who felt nettled at the contempt of the peddler, after communicating his orders, while he was retiring, exclaimed to his successor—

"You may keep yourself warm by dancing, John; the peddler-spy has tuned his fiddle, you hear, and it will not be long before Betty will strike up, in her turn."

The joke was followed by a general laugh from the party, who marched on in the performance of their duty. At this instant the door of the prison was opened and Betty reappeared, staggering back again toward her former quarters.

"Stop," said the sentinel, catching her by her clothes; "are you sure the spy is not in your pocket?"

"Can't you hear the rascal snoring in my room, you dirty blackguard?" sputtered Betty, her whole frame shaking with rage; "and is it so yee would sarve a dacent female, that a man must be put to sleep in the room wid her, you rapsallion?"

"Pooh! do you mind a fellow who's to be hanged in the morning? You see he sleeps already; to-morrow he'll take a long nap."

"Hands off, ye villain!" cried the wash-erwoman, relinquishing a small bottle that the trooper had succeeded in wrestling from her. "But I'll go to Captain Jack, and know if it's orders to put a hang-gallows spy in my room, ay, even in my widowed bed, you tief!"

"Silence, old Jezebel!" said the fellow with a laugh, taking the bottle from his mouth to breathe, "or you will wake the gentleman—would you disturb a man in his last sleep?"

"I'll wake Captain Jack, you reprobate villain, and bring him here to see me righted; he will punish ye all, for imposing on a dacent widowed body, you maul-rauder!"

With these words, which only extorted a laugh from the sentinel, Betty staggered round the end of the building, and made the best of her way toward the quarters of her favorite, Captain John Lawton, in search of redress. Neither the officer nor the woman, however, appeared during the night, and nothing further occurred to disturb the repose of the peddler, who, to the astonishment of the different sentinels, continued by his breathing to manifest how little the gallows could affect his slumbers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"A Daniel come to judgment—yea, a Daniel !—
O wise young judge, how I do honor thee!"

—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE Skinners followed Captain Lawton with alacrity toward the quarters occupied by the troop of that gentleman. The captain of dragoons had on all occasions manifested so much zeal for the cause in which he was engaged, was so regardless of personal danger when opposed to the enemy, and his stature and stern countenance contributed so much to render him terrific, that these qualities had, in some measure, procured him a reputation distinct from the corps in which he served. His intrepidity was mistaken for ferocity; and his hasty zeal for the natural love of cruelty. On the other hand, a few acts of clemency, or, more properly speaking, of discriminating justice, had, with one portion of the community, acquired for Dunwoodie the character of undue forbearance. It is seldom that either popular condemnation or popular applause falls, exactly in the quantities earned, where it is merited.

While in the presence of the major, the leader of the gang had felt himself under that restraint which vice must ever experience in the company of acknowledged virtue; but having left the house, he at once conceived that he was under the protection of a congenial spirit. There was a gravity in the manner of Lawton that deceived most of those who did not know him intimately; and it was a common saying in his troop, "that when the captain laughed, he was sure to punish." Drawing near his conductor, therefore, the leader commenced a confidential dialogue:

"'Tis always well for a man to know his friends from his enemies," said the half-licensed freebooter.

To this prefatory observation the captain made no other reply than a sound, which the other interpreted into assent.

"I suppose Major Dunwoodie has the good opinion of Washington?" continued the Skinner, in a tone that rather expressed a doubt than asked a question.

"There are some who think so."

"Many of the friends of Congress in this country," the man proceeded, "wish the horse was led by some other officer; for my part, if I could only be covered by a troop now and then, I could do many an important piece of service to the cause, to which this capture of the peddler would be a trifle."

"Indeed! such as what?"

"For the matter of that, it could be made as profitable to the officer as it would be to us who did it," said the Skinner, with a look of the most significant meaning.

"But how?" asked Lawton, a little impatiently, and quickening his step to get out of the hearing of the rest of the party.

"Why, near the royal lines, even under the very guns of the heights, might be good picking if we had a force to guard us from De Lancey's* men, and to cover our retreat from being cut off by the way of Kingsbridge."

"I thought the refugees took all that game to themselves."

"They do a little at it; but they are obliged to be sparing among their own people. I have been down twice, under an agreement with them: the first time they acted with honor; but the second they came upon us and drove us off, and took the plunder to themselves."

"That was a very dishonorable act, indeed; I wonder that an honorable man will associate with such rascals."

"It is necessary to have an understand-

* The partisan corps, called *Cow-boys* in the parlance of the country, was commanded by a Colonel De Lancey. This gentleman, for such he was by birth and education, rendered himself very odious to the Americans by his fancied cruelty, though there is no evidence of his being guilty of any acts unusual in this species of warfare.

Colonel De Lancey belonged to a family of the highest consequence in the American colonies, his uncle having died in the administration of the government of that of New York. He should not be confounded with other gentlemen of his name and family, many of whom served in the royal army. His cousin, Colonel Oliver De Lancey, was at the time of our tale adjutant-general of the British forces in America, having succeeded to the unfortunate André. The *Cow-boys* were sometimes called *Refugees*, in consequence of their having taken refuge under the protection of the crown.

ing with some of them, or we might be taken; but a man without honor is worse than a brute. Do you think Major Dunwoodie is to be trusted?"

"You mean on honorable principles?"

"Certainly; you know Arnold was thought well of until the royal major was taken."

"Why, I do not believe Dunwoodie would sell his command as Arnold wished to do; neither do I think him exactly trustworthy in a delicate business like this of yours."

"That's just my notion," rejoined the Skinner, with a self-approving manner that showed how much he was satisfied with his own estimate of character.

By this time they had arrived at a better sort of farm-house, the very extensive out-buildings of which were in tolerable repair, for the times. The barns were occupied by the men of the troop, while the horses were arranged under the long sheds which protected the yard from the cold north wind. The latter were quietly eating, with saddles on their backs, and bridles thrown on their necks, ready to be bitted and mounted at the shortest warning. Lawton excused himself for a moment, and entered his quarters. He soon returned, holding in his hand one of the common stable lanterns, and led the way to a large orchard that surrounded the building on three sides. The gang followed the trooper in silence, believing his object to be facility of communicating further on this interesting topic, without the danger of being overheard.

Approaching the captain, the Skinner renewed the discourse, with a view of establishing further confidence, and of giving his companion a more favorable opinion of his own intellect.

"Do you think the colonies will finally get the better of the king?" he inquired, with a little of the impatience of a politician.

"Get the better!" echoed the captain, with impetuosity—then checking himself, he continued, "no doubt they will. If the French will give us arms and money, we can drive out the royal troops in six months."

"Well, so I hope we shall soon; and then we shall have a free government, and we, who fight for it, will get our reward."

"Oh!" cried Lawton, "your claims will be indisputable; while all these vile Tories who live at home peaceably, to take care of their farms, will be held in the contempt they merit. You have no farm, I suppose?"

"Not yet—but it will go hard if I do not find one before the peace is made."

"Right; study your own interests, and you study the interests of your country; press the point of your own services, and rail at the Tories, and I'll bet my spurs against a rusty nail that you get to be a county clerk, at least."

"Dont you think Paulding's* party were fools in not letting the royal adjutant-general escape?" said the man, thrown off his guard by the freedom of the captain's manner.

"Fools!" cried Lawton, with a bitter laugh; "ay, fools indeed; King George would have paid them better, for he is richer. He would have made them gentlemen for their lives. But, thank God! there is a pervading spirit in the people that seems miraculous. Men who have nothing, act as if the wealth of the Indies depended on their fidelity; all are not villains like yourself, or we should have been slaves to England years ago."

"How!" exclaimed the Skinner, starting back, and dropping his musket to the level of the other's breast; "am I betrayed, and are you my enemy?"

"Miscreant!" shouted Lawton, his saber ringing in its steel scabbard as he struck the musket of the fellow from his hands, "offer but again to point your gun at me, and I'll cleave you to the middle."

"And you will not pay us, then, Captain Lawton?" said the Skinner, trembling in every joint; for just then he saw a

* The author must have intended some allusion to an individual which is too local to be understood by the general reader.

André, as is well known, was arrested by three countrymen, who were on the outlook for predatory parties of the enemy; the principal man of this party was named Paulding. The disinterested manner in which they refused the offers of their captive is a matter of history.

party of mounted dragoons silently encircling the whole party.

"Oh! pay you—yes, you shall have the full measure of your reward. There is the money that Colonel Singleton sent down for the captors of the spy," throwing a bag of guineas with disdain at the other's feet. "But ground your arms, you rascals, and see that the money is truly told."

The intimidated band did as they were ordered; and while they were eagerly employed in this pleasing avocation, a few of Lawton's men privately knocked the flints out of their muskets.

"Well," cried the impatient captain, "is it right? have you the promised reward?"

"There is just the money," said the leader; "and we will now go to our homes, with your permission."

"Hold! so much to redeem our promise—now for justice; we pay you for taking a spy, but we punish you for burning, robbing and murdering. Seize them, my lads, and give each of them the law of Moses—forty, save one."

This command was given to no unwilling listeners; and in the twinkling of an eye the Skinners were stripped and fastened, by the halters of the party to as many of the apple-trees as were necessary to furnish one to each of the gang. Swords were quickly drawn, and fifty branches cut from the trees, like magic; from these were selected a few of the most supple of the twigs, and a willing dragoon was soon found to wield each of the weapons. Captain Lawton gave the word, humanely cautioning the men not to exceed the discipline prescribed by the Mosaic law, and the uproar of Babel commenced in the orchard. The cries of the leader were easily to be distinguished above those of his men; a circumstance which might be accounted for, by Captain Lawton's reminding his corrector that he had to deal with an officer, and he should remember and pay him unusual honor. The flagellation was executed with great neatness and dispatch, and it was distinguished by no irregularity, excepting that none of the disciplinarians began to

count until they had tried their whips by a dozen or more blows, by the way, as they said themselves, of finding out the proper places to strike. As soon as this summary operation was satisfactorily completed, Lawton directed his men to leave the Skinners to replace their own clothes, and to mount their horses; for they were a party who had been detached for the purpose of patrolling lower down in the county.

"You see, my friend, said the captain to the leader of the Skinners, after he had prepared himself to depart, "I can cover you to some purpose, when necessary. If we meet often, you will be covered with scars, which, if not very honorable, will at least be merited."

The fellow made no reply. He was busy with his musket, and hastening his comrades to march; when, everything being ready, they proceeded sullenly toward some rocks at no great distance, which were overhung by a deep wood. The moon was just rising, and the group of dragoons could easily be distinguished where they had been left. Suddenly turning, the whole gang leveled their pieces and drew the triggers. The action was noticed, and the snapping of the locks was heard by the soldiers, who returned their futile attempt with a laugh of derision, the captain crying aloud:

"Ah! rascals, I knew you, and have taken away your flints."

"You should have taken away that in my pouch, too," shouted the leader, firing his gun in the next instant. The bullet grazed the ear of Lawton, who laughed as he shook his head, saying, "A miss was as good as a mile."

One of the dragoons had seen the preparations of the Skinner—who had been left alone by the rest of his gang as soon as they had made their abortive attempt at revenge—and was in the act of plunging his spurs into his horse as the fellow fired. The distance to the rocks was but small, yet the speed of the horse compelled the leader to abandon both money and musket, to effect his escape. The soldier returned with his prizes, and offered them to the acceptance of his captain, but Law-

ton rejected them, telling the man to retain them himself, until the rascal appeared in person to claim his property. It would have been a business of no small difficulty for any tribunal then existing in the new states to have enforced a restitution of money; for it was shortly after most equitably distributed by the hands of Sergeant Hollister, among a troop of horse. The patrol departed, and the captain slowly returned to his quarters, with an intention of retiring to rest. A figure moving rapidly among the trees, in the direction of the wood whither the Skinners had retired, caught his eye, and, wheeling on his heel, the cautious partisan approached it, and, to his astonishment, saw the washerwoman at that hour of the night, and in such a place.

"What, Betty? walking in your sleep, or dreaming while awake?" cried the trooper; "are you not afraid of meeting with the ghost of ancient Jenny in this her favorite pasture?"

"Ah, sure, Captain Jack," returned the sutler in her native accent, and reeling in a manner that made it difficult for her to raise her head, "it's not Jenny or her ghost that I'm seeking, but some yarbs for the wounded. And it's the virtue of the rising moon, as it just touches them, that I want. They grow under yon rocks, and I must hasten, or the charm will lose its power."

"Fool, you are fitter for your pallet than for wandering among those rocks; a fall from one of them would break your bones; besides, the Skinners have fled to these heights, and should you fall in with them, they would revenge on you a sound flogging they have just received from me. Better return, old woman, and finish your nap; we march in the morning."

Betty disregarded his advice, and continued her devious route to the hillside. For an instant, as Lawton mentioned the Skinners, she had paused, but immediately resuming her course, she was soon out of sight among the trees.

As the captain entered his quarters, the sentinel at the door inquired if he had met Mrs. Flanagan, and added that she had passed there, filling the air with

threats against her tormentors at the "Hotel," and inquiring for the captain, in search of redress. Lawton heard the man in astonishment—appeared struck with a new idea—walked several yards toward the orchard, and returned again; for several minutes he paced rapidly to and fro before the door of the house, and then hastily entering it, he threw himself on a bed in his clothes, and was soon in a profound sleep.

In the meantime, the gang of marauders had successfully gained the summit of the rocks, and, scattering in every direction, they buried themselves in the depths of the wood. Finding, however, there was no pursuit, which indeed would have been impracticable for horse, the leader ventured to call his band together with a whistle, and in a short time he succeeded in collecting his discomfited party, at a point where they had but little to apprehend from any enemy.

"Well," said one of the fellows, while a fire was lighting to protect them against the air, which was becoming extremely cold, "there is an end of our business in Westchester. The Virginia Horse will soon make the country too hot to hold us."

"I'll have his blood," muttered the leader, "if I die for it the next instant."

"Oh, you are very valiant, here, in the wood," cried the other, with a savage laugh; "why did you, who boast so much of your aim, miss your man at thirty yards?"

"'Twas the horseman that disturbed me, or I would have ended this Captain Lawton on the spot; besides the cold had set me a-shivering and I had no longer a steady hand."

"Say it was fear, and you will tell no lie," said his comrade with a sneer. "For my part, I think I shall never be cold again; my back burns as if a thousand gridirons were laid on it."

"And you would tamely submit to such usage, and kiss the rod that beat you?"

"As for kissing the rod, it would be no easy matter. Mine was broken into so

small pieces, on my own shoulders, that it would be difficult to find one big enough to kiss; but I would rather submit to lose half my skin than to lose the whole of it, with my ears in the bargain. And such will be our fate, if we tempt this mad Virginian again. God willing, I would at any time give him enough of my hide to make a pair of jack-boots, to get out of his hands with the remainder. If you had known when you were well off, you would have stuck to Major Dunwoodie, who don't know half so much of our evil-doings."

"Silence, you talking fool!" shouted the enraged leader; "your prating is sufficient to drive a man mad; is it not enough to be robbed and beaten, but we must be tormented with your folly?—help to get out the provisions, if any is left in the wallet, and try and stop your mouth with food."

This injunction was obeyed, and the whole party, amidst sundry groans and contortions, excited by the disordered state of their backs, made their arrangements for a scanty meal. A large fire of dry wood was burning in the cleft of a rock, and at length they began to recover from the confusion of their flight and to collect their scattered senses. Their hunger being appeased, and many of their garments thrown aside for the better opportunity of dressing their wounds, the gang began to plot measures of revenge. An hour was spent in this manner, and various expedients were proposed; but as they all depended upon personal prowess for their success, and were attended by great danger, they were of course rejected.

There was no possibility of approaching the troops by surprise, their vigilance being ever on the watch; and the hope of meeting Captain Lawton, away from his men, was equally forlorn, for the trooper was constantly engaged in his duty, and his movements were so rapid that any opportunity of meeting with him, at all, must depend greatly on accident. Besides, it was by no means certain that such an interview would result happily for themselves. The cunning of the trooper was notorious; and rough and broken as

was Westchester, the fearless partisan was known to take some desperate leaps, and stone walls were but slight impediments to the charges of the Southern Horse. Gradually, the conversation took another direction, until the gang determined on a plan which should both revenge themselves, and at the same time offer some additional stimulus to their exertions. The whole business was accurately discussed, the time fixed, and the manner adopted; in short, nothing was wanting to the previous arrangement for this deed of villainy, when they were aroused by a voice calling aloud:

"This way, Captain Jack—here are the rascals ating by a fire—this way and murder the thieves where they sit—quick, lave your horses and shoot your pistols!"

This terrific summons was enough to disturb all the philosophy of the gang. Springing on their feet they rushed deeper into the wood, and having already agreed upon a place of rendezvous previously to their intended expedition, they dispersed toward the four quarters of the heavens. Certain sounds and different voices were heard calling on each other, but as the marauders were well trained to speed of foot, they were soon lost in the distance.

It was not long before Betty Flanagan emerged from the darkness, and very coolly took possession of what the Skinners had left behind him; namely, food and divers articles of dress. The washerwoman deliberately seated herself and made a meal with great apparent satisfaction. For an hour she sat with her head upon her hand, in deep musing; then she gathered together such articles of the clothes as seemed to suit her fancy, and retired into the wood, leaving the fire to throw its glimmering light on the adjacent rocks until its last brand died away, and the place was abandoned to solitude and darkness.

CHAPTER XIX.

No longer then perplex the breast—
 When thoughts torment the first are best;
 'Tis mad to go, 'tis death to stay!
 Away, to Orra, haste away.

—LAPLAND LOVE SONG.

WHILE his comrades were sleeping in perfect forgetfulness of their hardships and dangers, the slumbers of Dunwoodie were broken and unquiet. After spending a night of restlessness he arose, unrefreshed, from the rude bed where he had thrown himself in his clothes, and, without awaking any of the group around him, he wandered into the open air in search of relief. The soft rays of the moon were just passing away in the more distinct light of the morning; the wind had fallen, and the rising mists gave the promise of another of those autumnal days which, in this unstable climate, succeed a tempest with the rapid transitions of magic. The hour had not yet arrived when he intended moving from his present position; and, willing to allow his warriors all the refreshment that circumstances would permit, he strolled toward the scene of the Skinners' punishment, musing upon the embarrassments of his situation, and uncertain how he should reconcile his sense of duty with his love.

Although Dunwoodie himself placed the most implicit reliance on the captain's purity of intention, he was by no means assured that a board of officers would be equally credulous; and, independently of all feelings of private regard, he felt certain that with the execution of Henry would be destroyed all hopes of a union with his sister. He had dispatched an officer, the preceding evening, to Colonel Singleton, who was in command of the advance posts, reporting the capture of the British captain, and, after giving his own opinion of his innocence, requesting orders as to the manner in which he was to dispose of his prisoner. These orders might be expected every hour, and his uneasiness increased in proportion as the moment approached when his friend might be removed from his protection. In this disturbed state of mind,

the major wandered through the orchard, and was stopped in his walk by arriving at the base of those rocks which had protected the Skinners in their flight before he was conscious whither his steps had carried him. He was about to turn and retrace his path to his quarters, when he was startled by a voice, bidding him:

"Stand or die!"

Dunwoodie turned in amazement, and beheld the figure of a man placed at a little distance above him on a shelving rock, with a musket leveled at himself. The light was not yet sufficiently powerful to reach the recesses of that gloomy spot, and a second look was necessary before he discovered, to his astonishment, that the peddler stood before him. Comprehending, in an instant, the danger of his situation, and disdaining to implore mercy or to retreat, had the latter been possible, the youth cried firmly:

"If I am to be murdered, fire! I will never become your prisoner."

"No, Major Dunwoodie," said Birch, lowering his musket, "it is neither my intention to capture nor to slay."

"What then would you have, mysterious being?" said Dunwoodie, hardly able to persuade himself that the form he saw was not a creature of the imagination.

"Your good opinion," answered the peddler, with emotion; "I would wish all good men to judge me with lenity."

"To you it must be indifferent what may be the judgment of men; for you seem to be beyond the reach of their sentence."

"God spares the lives of his servants to his own time," said the peddler, solemnly; "a few hours ago I was your prisoner, and threatened with the gallows; now you are mine; but, Major Dunwoodie, you are free. There are men abroad who would treat you less kindly. Of what service would that sword be to you against my weapon and a steady hand? Take the advice of one who has never harmed you, and who never will. Do not trust yourself in the skirts of any wood, unless in company and mounted."

"And have you comrades, who have

assisted you to escape, and who are less generous than yourself?"

"No—no, I am alone truly—none know me but my God and *Him*."

"And who?" asked the major, with an interest he could not control.

"None," continued the peddler, recovering his composure. "But such is not your case, Major Dunwoodie; you are young and happy; there are those that are dear to you, and such are not far away—danger is near them you love most,—danger within and without; double your watchfulness; strengthen your patrols—and be silent. With your opinion of me, should I tell you more, you would suspect an ambush. But remember and guard them you love best."

The peddler discharged the musket in the air, and threw it at the feet of his astonished auditor. When surprise and the smoke allowed Dunwoodie to look again on the rock where he had stood, the spot was vacant.

The youth was aroused from the stupor, which had been created by this strange scene, by the trampling of horses and the sound of the bugles. A patrol was drawn to the spot by the report of the musket, and the alarm had been given to the corps. Without entering into any explanation with his men, the major returned quickly to his quarters, where he found the whole squadron under arms, in battle array, impatiently awaiting the appearance of their leader. The officer whose duty it was to superintend such matters, had directed a party to lower the sign of the Hotel Flanagan, and the post was already arranged for the execution of the spy. On hearing from the major that the musket was discharged by himself, and was probably one of those dropped by the Skinners (for by this time Dunwoodie had learnt the punishment inflicted by Lawton, but chose to conceal his own interview with Birch), his officers suggested the propriety of executing their prisoner before they marched. Unable to believe that all he had seen was not a dream, Dunwoodie, followed by many of his officers, and preceded by Sergeant Hollister, went to the place which was supposed to contain the peddler.

"Well, sir," said the major to the sentinel who guarded the door, "I trust you have your prisoner in safety."

"He is yet asleep," replied the man, "and he makes such a noise I could hardly hear the bugles sound the alarm."

"Open the door, and bring him forth."

The order was obeyed; but to the utter amazement of the honest veteran who entered the prison, he found the room in no little disorder—the coat of the peddler where his body ought to have been, and part of the wardrobe of Betty scattered in disorder on the floor. The washer-woman herself occupied the pallet, in profound mental oblivion, clad as when last seen, excepting a little black bonnet, which she so constantly wore that it was commonly thought she made it perform the double duty of both day and night cap. The noise of their entrance and the exclamations of the party awoke the woman.

"Is it the breakfast that's wanting?" said Betty, rubbing her eyes; "faith, ye look as if ye would ate myself—but patience a little, darlings, and ye'll see such a fry as never was."

"Fry!" echoed the sergeant, forgetful of his religious philosophy and the presence of his officers; "we'll have you roasted, Jezebel!—you have helped that damn'd peddler to escape."

"Jezebel back agin in your teeth, and damn'd pidler, too, Mister Sergeant!" cried Betty, who was easily aroused; "what have I to do with piders, or escapes? I might have been a pidler's lady, and worn my silks, if I'd had Sawny M'Twill, instead of tagging at the heels of a parcel of dragooning rascallions, who don't know how to trate a lone body with dacency."

"The fellow has left my Bible," said the veteran, taking the book from the floor; "instead of spending his time in reading it to prepare for his end, like a good Christian, he has been busy in laboring to escape."

"And who would stay and be hanged like a dog?" cried Betty, beginning to comprehend the case; "'tishn't everyone

that's born to meet sich an ind—like yourself, Mister Hollister."

"Silence!" said Dunwoodie. "This must be inquired into closely, gentlemen; there is no outlet but the door, and he could not pass, unless the sentinel connived at his escape, or was asleep on his post. Call up the guard."

As these men were not paraded, curiosity had already drawn them to the place, and they one and all, with the exception of him before mentioned, denied that any person had passed out. The individual in question acknowledged that Betty had gone by him, but pleaded his orders in justification.

"You lie, you tief—you lie!" shouted Betty, who had impatiently listened to his exculpation; "would yee slanderize a lone woman, by saying she walks a camp at midnight?—Here have I been slaaping the long night, swaatly as the sucking babe."

"Here, sir," said the sergeant, turning respectfully to Dunwoodie, "is something written in my Bible that was not in it before; for having no family record, I would never suffer any scribbling in the sacred book."

One of the officers read aloud: "*These certify, that if suffered to get free, it is by God's help alone, to whose divine aid I humbly ricommind myself. I am forced to take the woman's clothes, but in her pocket is a ricompinse. — Witness my hand — Harvey Birch.*"

"What!" roared Betty, "has the tief robbed a lone woman of her all?—hang him—catch him and hang him, major, if there's law or justice in the land."

"Examine your pocket," said one of the youngsters, who was enjoying the scene, careless of the consequences.

"Ah! faith," cried the washerwoman, producing a guinea, "but he is a jewel of a pidler! Long life and a brisk trade to him, say I; he is wilcome to the duds—and if he is ever hanged, many a bigger rogue will go free."

Dunwoodie turned to leave the apartment, and he saw Captain Lawton standing with folded arms, contemplating the scene in profound silence. His manner, so

different from his usual impetuosity and zeal, struck his commander as singular. Their eyes met, and they walked together for a few minutes in close conversation, when Dunwoodie returned, and dismissed the guard to their place of rendezvous. Sergeant Hollister, however, continued along with Betty, who having found none of her vestments disturbed but such as the guinea more than paid for, was in high good humor. The washerwoman had for a long time looked on the veteran with the eyes of affection! and she had determined within herself to remove certain delicate objections which had long embarrassed her peculiar situation, as respected the corps, by making the sergeant the successor of her late husband. For some time past the trooper had seemed to flatter this preference; and Betty, conceiving that her violence might have mortified her suitor, was determined to make him all the amends in her power. Besides, rough and uncouth as she was, the washerwoman had still enough of the sex to know that the moments of reconciliation were the moments of power. She therefore poured out a glass of her morning beverage, and handed it to her companion as a peace-offering.

"A few warm words between friends are a trifle, yee must be knowing, sargeant," said the washerwoman; "it was Michael Flanagan that I ever calumnated the most when I was loving him the best."

"Michael was a good soldier and a brave man," said the trooper, finishing the glass; "our troop was covering the flank of his regiment when he fell, and I rode over his body myself during the day; poor fellow! he lay on his back, and looked as composed as if he had died a natural death after a year's consumption."

"Oh! Michael was a great consumer, and be sartain; two such as us make dreadful inroads in the stock, sargeant. But yee'r a sober, discrute man, Mister Hollister, and would be a helpmate indeed."

"Why, Mrs. Flanagan, I've tarried to speak on a subject that lies heavy at my

heart, and I will now open my mind, if you've leisure to listen."

"Is it listen?" cried the impatient woman; "and I'd listen to you, sargeant, if the officers never ate another mouthful; but take a second drop, dear; 'twill encourage you to spake freely."

"I am already bold enough in so good a cause," returned the veteran, rejecting her bounty. "Betty, do you think it was really the peddler-spy that I placed in this room the last night?"

"And who should it be else, darling?"

"The evil one."

"What, the devil?"

"Ay, even Beelzebub, disguised as the peddler; and them fellows we thought to be Skinners were his imps!"

"Well, sure, sargeant, dear, yee'r but little out this time anyway; for if the devil's imps go at large in the county Westchester, sure it is the Skinners themselves."

"Mrs. Flanagan, I mean in their incarnate spirits; the evil one knew that there was no one we would arrest sooner than the peddler Birch, and he took on his appearance to gain admission to your room."

"And what should the devil be wanting of me?" cried Betty, tartly; "and isn't there devils enough in the corps already; without one's coming from the bottomless pit to frighten a lone body?"

"'Twas in mercy to you, Betty, that he was permitted to come. You see he vanished through the door in your form, which is a symbol of your fate, unless you mend your life. Oh! I noticed how he trembled when I gave him the good book. Would any Christian, think you, my dear Betty, write in a Bible in this way; unless it might be the matter of births and deaths, and such lawful chronicles?"

The washerwoman was pleased with the softness of her lover's manner, but dreadfully scandalized at his insinuation. She, however, preserved her temper, and with the quickness of her own country's people, rejoined:

"And would the devil have paid for the clothes, think ye?—ay, and overpaid?"

"Doubtless the money is base," said the sergeant, a little staggered at such an evidence of honesty in one of whom, as to generals, he thought so meanly. "He tempted me with his glittering coin, but the Lord gave me strength to resist."

"The goold looks well; but I'll change it, anyway, with Captain Jack, the day. He is niver a bit afeared of any devil of them all!"

"Betty, Betty," said her companion, "do not speak so disreverently of the evil spirit; he is ever at hand, and will owe you a grudge for your language."

"Pooh! if he has any bowels at all, he won't mind a fillip or two from a poor lone woman; I'm sure no other Christian would."

"But the dark one has no bowels, except to devour the children of men," said the sergeant, looking around him in horror; "and it's best to make friends everywhere, for there is no telling what may happen till it comes. But, Betty, no man could have got out of this place and passed all the sentinels without being known; take awful warning from the visit, therefore—"

Here the dialogue was interrupted by a peremptory summons to the sutler to prepare the morning's repast, and they were obliged to separate; the woman secretly hoping that the interest the sergeant manifested was more earthly than he imagined, and the man bent on saving a soul from the fangs of the dark spirit that was prowling through their camp in quest of victims.

During the breakfast several expresses arrived, one of which brought intelligence of the actual force and destination of the enemy's expedition that was out on the Hudson; and another, orders to send Captain Wharton to the first post above, under the escort of a body of dragoons. These last instructions, or rather commands, for they admitted of no departure from their letter, completed the sum of Dunwoodie's uneasiness. The despair and misery of Frances were constantly before his eyes, and fifty times he was tempted to throw himself on his horse and gallop

to the Locusts; but an uncontrollable feeling prevented. In obedience to the commands of his superior, an officer, with a small party, was sent to the cottage to conduct Henry Wharton to the place directed; and the gentleman who was intrusted with the execution of the order was charged with a letter from Dunwoodie to his friend, containing the most cheering assurances of his safety, as well as the strongest pledges of his own unceasing exertions in his favor. Lawton was left with part of his own troop in charge of the few wounded; and as soon as the men were refreshed the encampment broke up, the main body marching toward the Hudson. Dunwoodie repeated his injunctions to Captain Lawton again and again—dwelt on every word that had fallen from the peddler, and canvassed, in every possible manner that his ingenuity could devise, the probable meaning of his mysterious warnings, until no excuse remained for delaying his own departure.

Suddenly recollecting, however, that no directions had been given for the disposal of Colonel Wellmere, instead of following the rear of the column, the major yielded to his desires, and turned down the road which led to the Locusts. The horse of Dunwoodie was fleet as the wind, and scarcely a minute seemed to have passed before he gained sight, from an eminence, of the lonely vale; and as he was plunging into the bottom lands that formed its surface, he caught a glimpse of Henry Wharton and his escort, at a distance, defiling through a pass which led to the posts above. This sight added to the speed of the anxious youth, who now turned the angle of the hill that opened to the valley, and came suddenly on the object of his search. Frances had followed the party which guarded her brother at a distance; and as they vanished from her sight, she felt deserted by all that she most prized in this world. The unaccountable absence of Dunwoodie, with the shock of parting from Henry under such circumstances, had entirely subdued her fortitude, and she had sunk on a stone by the roadside, sobbing as if her heart would break. Dunwoodie sprang from his char-

ger, threw the reins over the neck of the animal, and in a moment he was by the side of the weeping girl.

"Frances—my own Frances!" he exclaimed, "why this distress? let not the situation of your brother create any alarm. As soon as the duty I am now on is completed, I will hasten to the feet of Washington, and beg his release. The Father of his Country will never deny such a boon to one of his favorite pupils."

"Major Dunwoodie, for your interest in behalf of my poor brother, I thank you," said the trembling girl, drying her eyes, and rising with dignity; "but such language addressed to me is surely improper."

"Improper! are you not mine—by the consent of your father—your aunt—your brother—nay, by your own consent, my sweet Frances?"

"I wish not, Major Dunwoodie, to interfere with the prior claims that any other lady may have to your affections," said Frances, struggling to speak with firmness.

"None other, I swear by heaven, none other has any claim on me!" cried Dunwoodie with fervor: "you alone are mistress of my inmost soul."

"You have practiced so much, and so successfully, Major Dunwoodie, that it is no wonder you excel in deceiving the credulity of my sex," returned Frances, attempting a smile, which the tremulousness of her muscles smothered in its birth.

"Am I a villain, Miss Wharton, that you receive me with such language?—when have I ever deceived you, Frances? who has practiced in this manner on your purity of heart?"

"Why has not Major Dunwoodie honored the dwelling of his intended father with his presence lately? Did he forget it contained one friend on a bed of sickness and another in deep distress? Has it escaped his memory that it held his intended wife? Or is he fearful of meeting more than one that can lay a claim to that title? Oh, Peyton—Peyton, how have I been deceived in you! With the foolish credulity of my youth, I thought

you all that was brave, noble, generous and loyal."

"Frances, I see how you have deceived yourself," cried Dunwoodie, his face in a glow of fire; "you do me injustice; I swear by all that is most dear to me that you do me injustice."

"Swear not, Major Dunwoodie," interrupted Frances, her fine countenance lighting with the luster of womanly pride; "the time is gone by for me to credit oaths."

"Miss Wharton, would you have me a coxcomb—make me contemptible in my own eyes, by boasting with the hope of raising myself in your estimation?"

"Flatter not yourself that the task is so easy, sir," returned Frances, moving toward the cottage; "we converse together in private for the last time; but—possibly—my father would welcome my mother's kinsman."

"No, Miss Wharton, I cannot enter his dwelling now; I should act in a manner unworthy of myself. You drive me from you, Frances, in despair. I am going on desperate service, and may not live to return. Should fortune prove severe, at least do my memory justice; remember that the last breathings of my soul will be for your happiness." So saying, he had already placed his foot in the stirrup, but his youthful mistress turning on him an eye that pierced his soul, arrested the action.

"Peyton—Major Dunwoodie," she said, "can you ever forget the sacred cause in which you are enlisted? Duty both to your God and to your country forbids you doing anything rashly. The latter has need of your services; besides—" but her voice became choked, and she was unable to proceed.

"Besides what?" echoed the youth, springing to her side, and offering to take her hand in his own. Frances having, however, recovered herself, coldly repulsed him, and continued her walk homeward.

"Is this our parting?" cried Dunwoodie, in agony; "am I a wretch that you treat me so cruelly? You have never loved me, and wish to conceal your own

fickleness by accusations that you will not explain."

Frances stopped short in her walk, and turned on him a look of so much purity and feeling, that, heart-stricken, Dunwoodie would have knelt at her feet for pardon, but motioning him for silence, she once more spoke:

"Hear me, Major Dunwoodie, for the last time; it is a bitter knowledge when we first discover our own inferiority; but it is a truth that I have lately learnt. Against you I bring no charges—make no accusations; no, not willingly in my thoughts. Were my claims to your heart just, I am not worthy of you. It is not a feeble, timid girl like me that could make you happy. No, Peyton, you are formed for great and glorious actions, deeds of daring and renown, and should be united to a soul like your own; one that can rise above the weakness of her sex. I should be a weight to drag you to the dust; but with a different spirit in your companion, you might soar to the very pinnacle of earthly glory. To such a one, therefore, I resign you freely, if not cheerfully; and pray, oh, how fervently do I pray! that with such a one you may be happy."

"Lovely enthusiast!" cried Dunwoodie, "you know not yourself, nor me. It is a woman, mild and gentle, and dependent as yourself, that my very nature loves; deceive not yourself with visionary ideas of generosity, which will only make me miserable."

"Farewell, Major Dunwoodie," said the agitated girl, pausing for a moment to gasp for breath; "forget that you ever knew me—remember the claims of your bleeding country; and be happy."

"Happy!" repeated the youthful soldier, bitterly, as he saw her light form gliding through the gate of the lawn, and disappearing behind its shrubbery; "yes, I am now happy, indeed!"

Throwing himself into the saddle, he plunged his spurs into his horse, and soon overtook his squadron, which was marching slowly over the hilly roads of the country, to gain the banks of the Hudson.

But painful as were the feelings of Dunwoodie at this unexpected termination of

the interview with his mistress, they were but light compared with those which were experienced by the fond girl herself. Frances had, with the keen eye of jealous love, easily detected the attachment of Isabella Singleton to Dunwoodie. Delicate and retiring herself, it never could present itself to her mind that this love had been unsought. Ardent in her own affections, and artless in their exhibition, she had early caught the eye of the young soldier; but it required all the manly frankness of Dunwoodie to court her favor and the most pointed devotion to obtain his conquest. This done, his power was durable, entire and engrossing.

But the unusual occurrences of the few preceding days, the altered mien of her lover during those events, his unwonted indifference to herself, and chiefly the romantic idolatry of Isabella, had aroused new sensations in her bosom. With a dread of her lover's integrity had been awakened the never-failing concomitant of the purest affection, a distrust of her own merits. In the moment of enthusiasm, the task of resigning her lover to another, who might be more worthy of him, seemed easy; but it is in vain that the imagination attempts to deceive the heart. Dunwoodie had no sooner disappeared than our heroine felt all the misery of her situation; and if the youth found some relief in the cares of his command, Frances was less fortunate in the performance of a duty imposed on her by filial piety. The removal of his son had nearly destroyed the little energy of Mr. Wharton, who required all the tenderness of his remaining children to convince him that he was able to perform the ordinary functions of life.

CHAPTER XX.

Flatter, and praise, commend, extol their graces;
Though ne'er so black, say, they have angels' faces.
That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man,
If with his tongue he cannot win a woman.

—TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

In making the arrangements by which Captain Lawton had been left, with Sergeant Hollister and twelve men, as a guard

over the wounded and heavy baggage of the corps, Dunwoodie had consulted not only the information which had been conveyed in the letter of Colonel Singleton, but the bruises of his comrade's body. In vain Lawton declared himself fit for any duty that man could perform, and plainly intimated that his men would never follow Tom Mason to a charge with the alacrity and confidence with which they followed himself; his commander was firm, and the reluctant captain was compelled to comply with as good a grace as he could assume. Before parting, Dunwoodie repeated his caution to keep a watchful eye on the inmates of the cottage; and especially enjoined him if any movements of a particularly suspicious nature were seen in the neighborhood, to break up from his present quarters, and to move down with his party, and take possession of the domains of Mr. Wharton. A vague suspicion of danger to the family had been awakened in the breast of the major by the language of the peddler, although he was unable to refer it to any particular source, or to understand why it was to be apprehended.

For some time after the departure of the troops, the captain was walking before the door of the "Hotel," inwardly cursing his fate, that condemned him to an inglorious idleness at a moment when a meeting with the enemy might be expected, and replying to the occasional queries of Betty, who, from the interior of the building, ever and anon demanded, in a high tone of voice, an explanation of various passages in the peddler's escape, which as yet she could not comprehend. At this instant he was joined by the surgeon, who had hitherto been engaged among his patients in a distant building, and was profoundly ignorant of everything that had occurred, even to the departure of the troops.

"Where are all the sentinels, John?" he inquired, as he gazed around with a look of curiosity, "and why are you here alone?"

"Off—all off, with Dunwoodie, to the river. You and I are left here to take care of a few sick men and some women."

"I am glad, however," said the surgeon, "that Major Dunwoodie had consideration enough not to move the wounded. Here, you Mrs. Elizabeth Flanagan, hasten with some food, that I may appease my appetite. I have a dead body to dissect, and am in haste."

"And here, you Mr. Dr. Archibald Sitgreaves," echoed Betty, showing her blooming countenance from a broken window of the kitchen, "you are ever a-coming too late: here is nothing to ate but the skin of Jenny, and the body yee'r mintoning."

"Woman!" said the surgeon in anger, "do you take me for a cannibal, that you address your filthy discourse to me in this manner? I bid you hasten with such food as may be proper to be received into the stomach fasting."

"And-I'm sure it's for a pop-gun that I should be taking you sooner than for a cannon-ball," said Betty, winking at the captain; "and I tell yee that it's fasting you must be, unless yee'l let me cook you a steak from the skin of Jenny. The boys have ate me up intirely."

Lawton now interferred to preserve the peace, and assured the surgeon that he had already dispatched the proper persons in quest of food for the party. A little mollified with this explanation, the operator soon forgot his hunger and declared his intention of proceeding to business at once.

"And where is your subject?" asked Lawton.

"The peddler," said the other, glancing a look at the sign-post. "I made Hollister put a stage so high that the neck would not be dislocated by the fall, and I intend making as handsome a skeleton of him as there is in the States of North America; the fellow has good points and his bones are well-knit. I will make a perfect beauty of him. I have long been wanting something of this sort to send as a present to my old aunt in Virginia, who was so kind to me when a boy."

"The devil!" cried Lawton; "would you send the old woman a dead man's bones?"

"Why not?" said the surgeon; "what

nobler object is there in nature than the figure of a man—and the skeleton may be called his elementary parts. But what has been done with the body?"

"Off, too."

"Off! and who has dared to interfere with my perquisites?"

"Sure, jist the devil," said Betty; "and who'll be taking yerself away, some of these times, too, without asking yer lave."

"Silence, you witch!" said Lawton, with difficulty suppressing a laugh; "is this the manner in which to address an officer?"

"Who called me the filthy Elizabeth Flanagan?" cried the washerwoman, snapping her fingers contemptuously; "I can remember a frind for a year, and don't forgit an inimy for a month."

But the friendship or enmity of Mrs. Flanagan was alike indifferent to the surgeon, who could think of nothing but his loss; and Lawton was obliged to explain to his friend the apparent manner in which it had happened.

"And a lucky escape it was for yee, my jewel of a doctor," cried Betty, as the captain concluded. "Sergeant Hollister, who saw him face to face, as it might be, says it's Beelzeboob, and no pidler, unless it may be in a small matter of lies and thefts, and sich wickedness. Now a pretty figure yee would have been in cutting up Beelzeboob, if the major had hanged him. I don't think it's very asy he would have been under yee'r knife."

Thus doubly disappointed in his meal and his business, Sitgreaves suddenly declared his intention of visiting the "Locusts," and inquiring into the state of Captain Singleton. Lawton was ready for the excursion; and mounting, they were soon on the road, though the surgeon was obliged to submit to a few more jokes from the washerwoman before he could get out of hearing. For some time the two rode in silence, when Lawton, perceiving that his companion's temper was somewhat ruffled by his disappointments and Betty's attack, made an effort to restore the tranquillity of his feelings.

"That was a charming song, Archibald, that you commenced last evening, when

we were interrupted by the party that brought in the peddler," he said: "the allusion to Galen was much to the purpose."

"I knew you would like it, Jack, when you had got the fumes of the wine out of your head. Poetry is a respectable art, though it wants the precision of the exact sciences and the natural beneficence of the physical. Considered in reference to the wants of life, I should define poetry as an emollient, rather than as a succulent."

"And yet your ode was full of the meat of wit."

"Ode is by no means a proper term for the composition; I should term it a classical ballad."

"Very probably," said the trooper; "hearing only one verse, it was difficult to class the composition."

The surgeon involuntarily hemmed, and began to clear his throat, although scarcely conscious himself to what the preparation tended. But the captain, rolling his dark eyes toward his companion, and observing him to be sitting with great uneasiness on his horse, continued:

"The air still, and the road solitary—why not give the remainder? It is never too late to repair a loss."

"My dear John, if I thought it would correct the errors you have imbibed, from habit and indulgence, nothing could give me more pleasure."

"We are fast approaching some rocks on our left; the echo will double my satisfaction."

Thus encouraged, and somewhat impelled by the opinion that he both sang and wrote with taste, the surgeon set about complying with the request in sober earnest. Some little time was lost in clearing his throat, and getting the proper pitch of his voice; but no sooner were these two points achieved than Lawton had the secret delight of hearing his friend commence:

"'Hast thou ever ——'"

"Hush!" interrupted the trooper; "what rustling noise is that among the rocks?"

"It must have been the rushing of the

melody. A powerful voice is like the breathing of the winds.

"'Hast thou ever ——'"

"Listen!" said Lawton, stopping his horse. He had not done speaking when a stone fell at his feet, and rolled harmlessly across the path.

"A friendly shot, that," cried the trooper; "neither the weapon nor its force implies much ill-will."

"Blows from stones seldom produce more than contusions," said the operator, bending his gaze in every direction in vain, in quest of the hand from which the missile had been hurled; "it must be meteoric; there is no living being in sight, except ourselves."

"It would be easy to hide a regiment behind those rocks," returned the trooper, dismounting and taking the stone in his hand—Oh! here is the explanation along with the mystery." So saying, he tore a piece of paper that had been ingeniously fastened to the small fragment of rock which had thus singularly fallen before him; and opening it, the captain read the following words, written in no very legible hand:

"A musket bullet will go farther than a stone, and things more dangerous than yarbs for wounded men lie hid in the rocks of Westchester. The horse may be good, but can he mount a precipice?"

"Thou sayest the truth, strange man," said Lawton; "courage and activity would avail but little against assassination and these rugged passes." Remounting his horse, he cried aloud—"Thanks, unknown friend; your caution will be remembered."

A meager hand was extended for an instant over a rock, in the air, and afterward nothing further was seen or heard, in that quarter, by the soldiers.

"Quite an extraordinary interruption," said the astonished Sitgreaves, "and a letter of a very mysterious meaning."

"Oh! 'tis nothing but the wit of some bumpkin, who thinks to frighten two of the Virginians by an artifice of this kind," said the trooper, placing the billet in his pocket; "but let me tell you, Mr. Archi-

bald Sitgreaves, you were wanting to dissect, just now, a damn'd honest fellow."

"It was the peddler—one of the most notorious spies in the enemy's service; and I must say that I think it would be an honor to such a man to be devoted to the use of science."

"He may be a spy—he must be one," said Lawton, musing; "but he has a heart above enmity, and a soul that would honor a soldier."

The surgeon turned a vacant eye on his companion as he uttered this soliloquy, while the penetrating looks of the trooper had already discovered another pile of rocks, which, jutting forward, nearly obstructed the highway that wound directly around its base.

"What the steed cannot mount, the foot of man can overcome," exclaimed the wary partisan. Throwing himself again from his saddle, and leaping a wall of stone, he began to ascend the hill at a pace which would soon have given him a bird's-eye view of the rocks in question, together with all their crevices. This movement was no sooner made, than Lawton caught a glimpse of the figure of a man stealing rapidly from his approach, and disappearing on the opposite side of the precipice.

"Spur, Sitgreaves—spur," shouted the trooper, dashing over every impediment in pursuit, "and murder the villain as he flies."

The former part of the request was promptly complied with, and a few moments brought the surgeon in full view of a man armed with a musket, who was crossing the road, and evidently seeking the protection of the thick wood on its opposite side.

"Stop, my friend—stop until Captain Lawton comes up, if you please," cried the surgeon, observing him to flee with a rapidity that baffled his horsemanship. But as if the invitation contained new terrors, the footman redoubled his efforts, nor paused even to breathe, until he had reached his goal, when, turning on his heel, he discharged his musket toward the surgeon, and was out of sight in an in-

stant. To gain the highway, and throw himself into his saddle, detained Lawton but a moment, and he rode to the side of his comrade just as the figure disappeared.

"Which way has he fled?" cried the trooper.

"John," said the surgeon, "am I not a non-combatant?"

"Whither has the rascal fled?" cried Lawton, impatiently.

"Where you cannot follow—into that wood. But I repeat, John, am I not a non-combatant?"

The disappointed trooper, perceiving that his enemy had escaped him, now turned his eyes, which were flashing with anger, upon his comrade, and gradually his muscles lost their rigid compression, his brow relaxed, and his look changed from its fierce expression to the covert laughter which so often distinguished his countenance. The surgeon sat in dignified composure on his horse; his thin body erect, and his head elevated with the indignation of one conscious of having been unjustly treated.

"Why did you suffer the villain to escape?" demanded the captain. "Once within reach of my saber, and I would have given you a subject for the dissecting table."

"'Twas impossible to prevent it," said the surgeon, pointing to the bars before which he had stopped his horse.—"The rogue threw himself on the other side of this fence, and left me where you see; nor would the man in the least attend to my remonstrances, or to an intimation that you wished to hold discourse with him."

"He was truly a discourteous rascal; but why did you not leap the fence, and compel him to halt?—you see but three of the bars are up, and Betty Flanagan could clear them on her cow."

The surgeon, for the first time, withdrew his eyes from the place where the fugitive had disappeared, and turned his look on his comrade. His head, however, was not permitted to lower itself in the least, as he replied:

"I humbly conceive, Captain Lawton, that neither Mrs. Elizabeth Flanagan, nor her cow, is an example to be emulated by

Doctor Archibald Sitgreaves; it would be but a sorry compliment to science, to say that a doctor of medicine had fractured both his legs by injudiciously striking them against a pair of bar-posts." While speaking, the surgeon raised the limbs in question to a nearly horizontal position, an attitude which really appeared to bid defiance to anything like a passage for himself through the defile; but the trooper, disregarding this ocular proof of the impossibility of the movement, cried hastily:

"Here was nothing to stop you, man; I could leap a platform through, boot and thigh, without pricking with a single spur. Pshaw! I have often charged upon the bayonets of infantry over greater difficulties than this."

"You will please to remember, Captain John Lawton, that I am not the riding-master of the regiment—nor a drill sergeant—nor a crazy cornet; no, sir—and I speak it with a due respect for the commission of the Continental Congress—nor an inconsiderate captain, who regards his own life as little as that of his enemies. I am only, sir, a poor humble man of letters, a mere doctor of medicine, an unworthy graduate of Edinburgh, and a surgeon of dragoons; nothing more, I do assure you, Captain John Lawton." So saying, he turned his horse's head toward the cottage, and recommenced his ride.

"Ay! you speak the truth," muttered the dragoon; "had I but the meanest rider of my troop with me, I should have taken the scoundrel, and given at least one victim to the laws. But, Archibald, no man can ride well who straddles in this manner, like the Colossus of Rhodes. You should depend less on your stirrup, and keep your seat by the power of the knee."

"With proper deference to your experience, Captain Lawton," returned the surgeon, "I conceive myself to be no incompetent judge of muscular action, whether in the knee, or any other part of the human frame. And although but humbly educated, I am now to learn that the wider the base, the more firm is the superstructure."

"Would you fill a highway in this man-

ner, with one pair of legs, when half a dozen might pass together in comfort, stretching them abroad like the scythes of the ancient chariot wheels?"

The allusion to the practice of the ancients somewhat softened the indignation of the surgeon, and he replied, with rather less hauteur:

"You should speak with reverence of the usages of those who have gone before us, and who, however ignorant they were in matters of science, and particularly that of surgery, yet furnished many brilliant hints to our own improvements. Now, sir, I have no doubt that Galen has operated on wounds occasioned by these very scythes that you mention, although we can find no evidence of the fact in contemporary writers. Ah! they must have given dreadful injuries, and, I doubt not, caused great uneasiness to the medical gentlemen of that day."

"Occasionally a body must have been left in two pieces, to puzzle the ingenuity of those gentry to unite. Yet, venerable and learned as they were, I doubt not they did it."

"What! unite two parts of the human body, that have been severed by an edged instrument, to any of the purposes of animal life?"

"That have been rent by a scythe, and are united to do military duty," said Lawton.

"'Tis impossible—quite impossible," cried the surgeon; "it is in vain, Captain Lawton, that human ingenuity endeavors to baffle the efforts of nature. Think, my dear sir, in this case you separate all the arteries; injure all of the intestines; sever all of the nerves and sinews; and what is of more consequence, you——"

"You have said enough, Dr. Sitgreaves, to convince a member of a rival school. Nothing shall ever tempt me willingly to submit to be divided in this irretrievable manner."

"Certes, there is little pleasure in a wound which, from its nature, is incurable."

"I should think so," said Lawton, dryly.

"What do you think is the greatest

pleasure in life?" asked the operator, suddenly.

"That must greatly depend on taste."

"Not at all," cried the surgeon; "it is in witnessing, or rather feeling, the ravages of disease repaired by the lights of science co-operating with nature. I once broke my little finger intentionally, in order that I might reduce the fracture and watch the cure; it was only on a small scale, you know, dear John; still the thrilling sensation excited by the knitting of the bone, aided by the contemplation of the art of man thus acting in unison with nature, exceeded any other enjoyment that I have ever experienced. Now, had it been one of the more important members, such as the leg or arm, how much greater must the pleasure have been!"

"Or the neck," said the trooper; "but their desultory discourse was interrupted by their arrival at the cottage of Mr. Wharton. No one appearing to usher them into an apartment, the captain proceeded to the door of the parlor, where he knew visitors were commonly received. On opening it, he paused for a moment, in admiration at the scene within. The person of Colonel Wellmere first met his eye, bending toward the figure of the blushing Sarah, with an earnestness of manner that prevented the noise of Lawton's entrance from being heard by either of the parties. Certain significant signs, which were embraced at a glance by the prying gaze of the trooper, at once made him a master of their secret; and he was about to retire as silently as he had advanced, when his companion, pushing himself through the passage, abruptly entered the room. Advancing instantly to the chair of Wellmere, the surgeon instinctively laid hold of his arm, and exclaimed:

"Bless me!—a quick and irregular pulse—flushed cheek and fiery eye—strong febrile symptoms, and such as must be attended to." While speaking, the doctor, who was much addicted to practicing in a summary way—a weakness of most medical men in military practice, had already produced his lancet, and was making certain other indications of his intentions to proceed at once to business. But Colonel

Wellmere, recovering from the confusion of the surprise, arose from his seat haughtily and said:

"Sir, it is the warmth of the room that lends me the color, and I am already too much indebted to your skill to give you any farther trouble; Miss Wharton knows that I am quite well, and I do assure you that I never felt better or happier in my life."

There was a peculiar emphasis on the latter part of this speech that, however it might gratify the feelings of Sarah, brought the color to her cheeks again; and Sitgreaves, as his eye followed the direction of those of his patient, did not fail to observe it.

"Your arm, if you please, madam," said the surgeon, advancing with a bow; "anxiety and watching have done their work on your delicate frame, and there are symptoms about you that must not be neglected."

"Excuse me, sir," said Sarah, recovering herself with womanly pride; "the heat is oppressive, and I will retire and acquaint Miss Peyton with your presence."

There was but little difficulty in practicing on the abstracted simplicity of the surgeon; but it was necessary for Sarah to raise her eyes to return the salutation of Lawton, as he bowed his head nearly to a level with the hand that held open the door for her passage. One look was sufficient; she was able to control her steps sufficiently to retire with dignity; but no sooner was she relieved from the presence of all observers than she fell into a chair, and abandoned herself to a feeling of mingled shame and pleasure.

A little nettled at the contumacious deportment of the British colonel, Sitgreaves, after once more tendering services that were again rejected, withdrew to the chamber of young Singleton, whither Lawton had already preceded him.

CHAPTER XXI.

Oh, Henry, when thou deign'st to sue,
 Can I thy suit withstand?
 When thou, loved youth, hast won my heart,
 Can I refuse my hand?

—HERMIT OF WARKWORTH.

THE graduate of Edinburgh found his patient rapidly improving in health, and entirely free from fever. His sister, with a cheek that was, if possible, paler than on her arrival, watched around his couch with tender care, and the ladies of the cottage had not, in the midst of their sorrows and varied emotions, forgotten to discharge the duties of hospitality. Frances felt herself impelled toward their disconsolate guest with an interest for which she could not account and with a force that she could not control. She had unconsciously connected the fates of Dunwoodie and Isabella in her imagination, and she felt, with the romantic ardor of a generous mind, that she was serving her former lover most by exhibiting kindness to her he loved best. Isabella received her attentions with gratitude, but neither of them indulged in any allusions to the latest source of their uneasiness. The observation of Miss Peyton seldom penetrated beyond things that were visible, and to her the situation of Henry Wharton seemed to furnish an awful excuse for the fading cheeks and tearful eyes of her niece. If Sarah manifested less of care than her sister, still the unpracticed aunt was not at a loss to comprehend the reason. Love is a holy feeling with the virtuous of the female sex, and it hallows all that comes within its influence. Although Miss Peyton mourned with sincerity over the danger which threatened her nephew, she well knew that an active campaign was not favorable to love, and the moments that were thus accidentally granted were not to be thrown away.

Several days now passed without any interruption of the usual avocations of the inhabitants of the cottage, or the party at the Four Corners. The former were supporting their fortitude with the certainty of Henry's innocence, and a strong reliance on Dunwoodie's exertions

in his behalf, and the latter, waiting with impatience the intelligence, that was hourly expected, of a conflict, and their orders to depart. Captain Lawton, however, waited for both these events in vain. Letters from the major announced that the enemy, finding that the party which was to co-operate with them had been defeated and was withdrawn, had retired also behind the works of Fort Washington, where they continued inactive, threatening constantly to strike a blow in revenge for their disgrace. The trooper was enjoined to vigilance, and the letter concluded with a compliment to his honor, zeal, and undoubted bravery.

"Extremely flattering, Major Dunwoodie," muttered the dragoon, as he threw down this epistle, and stalked across the floor to quiet his impatience. "A proper guard have you selected for this service: let me see—I have to watch over the interests of a crazy, irresolute old man, who does not know whether he belongs to us or to the enemy; four women, three of whom are well enough in themselves, but who are not immensely flattered by my society; and the fourth, who, good as she is, is on the wrong side of forty; some two or three blacks; a talkative housekeeper, that does nothing but chatter about gold and de-spisables, and signs and omens; and poor George Singleton. Well, a comrade in suffering has a claim on a man—so I'll make the best of it."

As he concluded this soliloquy, the trooper took a seat and began to whistle, to convince himself how little he cared about the matter, when, by throwing his booted leg carelessly round, he upset the canteen that held his whole stock of brandy. The accident was soon repaired, but in replacing the wooden vessel, he observed a billet lying on the bench on which the liquor had been placed. It was soon opened, and he read: "*The moon will not rise till after midnight—a fit time for deeds of darkness.*" There was no mistaking the hand; it was clearly the same which had given him the timely warning against assassination, and the trooper continued, for a long time, musing on the nature of these two notices, and the

motives that could induce the peddler to favor an implacable enemy in the manner that he had latterly done. That he was a spy of the enemy, Lawton knew; for the fact of his conveying intelligence to the English commander-in-chief, of a party of Americans that were exposed to the enemy, was proved most clearly against him on the trial for his life. The consequences of his treason had been avoided, it is true, by a lucky order from Washington, which withdrew the regiment a short time before the British appeared to cut it off, but still the crime was the same; "perhaps," thought the partisan, "he wishes to make a friend of me against the event of another capture; but, at all events, he spared my life on one occasion, and saved it on another. I will endeavor to be as generous as himself, and pray that my duty may never interfere with my feelings."

Whether the danger, intimated in the present note, threatened the cottage or his own party, the captain was uncertain, but he inclined to the latter opinion, and determined to beware how he rode abroad in the dark. To a man in a peaceable country, and in times of quiet and order, the indifference with which the partisan regarded the impending danger would be inconceivable. His reflections on the subject were more directed toward devising means to entrap his enemies than to escape their machinations. But the arrival of the surgeon, who had been to pay his daily visit to the Locusts, interrupted his meditations. Sitgreaves brought an invitation from the mistress of the mansion to Captain Lawton, desiring that the cottage might be honored with his presence at an early hour that evening.

"Ha!" cried the trooper; "then they have received a letter also."

"I think nothing more probable," said the surgeon; "there is a chaplain at the cottage from the royal army, who has come out to exchange the British wounded, and who has an order from Colonel Singleton for their delivery. But a more mad project than to remove them now was never adopted."

"A priest, say you!—is he a hard

drinker—a real camp idler—a fellow to breed a famine in a regiment? or does he seem a man who is in earnest in his trade?"

"A very respectable and orderly gentleman, and not unreasonably given to intemperance, judging from the outward symptoms," returned the surgeon; "and a man who really says grace in a very regular and appropriate manner."

"And does he stay the night?"

"Certainly, he waits for his cartel; but hasten, John, we have but little time to waste. I will just step up and bleed two or three of the Englishmen who are to move in the morning, in order to anticipate inflammation, and be with you immediately."

The gala suit of Captain Lawton was easily adjusted to his huge frame, and his companion being ready, they once more took their route toward the cottage. Roanoke had been as much benefited by the few days' rest as his master; and Lawton ardently wished, as he curbed his gallant steed on passing the well-remembered rocks, that his treacherous enemy stood before him, mounted and armed as himself. But no enemy, nor any disturbance whatever, interfered with their progress, and they reached the Locusts just as the sun was throwing his setting rays on the valley and tinging the tops of the leafless trees with gold. It never required more than a single look to acquaint the trooper with the particulars of every scene that was not uncommonly veiled, and the first survey that he took on entering the house told him more than the observations of a day had put into the possession of Dr. Sitgreaves. Miss Peyton accosted him with a smiling welcome that exceeded the bounds of ordinary courtesy, and which evidently flowed more from feelings that were connected with the heart, than from manner. Frances glided about tearful and agitated, while Mr. Wharton stood ready to receive them, decked in a suit of velvet that would have been conspicuous in the gayest drawing-room. Colonel Wellmere was in the uniform of an officer of the Household troops of his prince, and

Isabella Singleton sat in the parlor, clad in the habiliments of joy, but with a countenance that belied her appearance; while her brother by her side looked, with a cheek of fitting color, and an eye of intense interest, like anything but an invalid. As it was the third day that he had left his room, Dr. Sitgreaves, who began to stare about him in stupid wonder, forgot to reprove his patient for imprudence. Into this scene Captain Lawton moved with all the composure and gravity of a man whose nerves were not easily discomposed by novelties. His compliments were received as graciously as they were offered, and after exchanging a few words with the different individuals present, he approached the surgeon, who had withdrawn, in a kind of confused astonishment, to rally his senses.

"John," whispered the surgeon, with awakened curiosity, "what means this festival?"

"That your wig and my black head would look the better for a little of Betty Flanagan's flour; but it is too late now, and we must fight the battle armed as you see."

"Observe, here comes the army chaplain in full robes, as a doctor divinitatis; what can it mean?"

"An exchange," said the trooper; "the wounded of Cupid are to meet and settle their accounts with the god, in the way of plighting faith to suffer from his archery no more."

The surgeon laid a finger on the side of his nose, and he began to comprehend the case.

"Is it not a crying shame that a sunshine hero, and an enemy, should thus be suffered to steal away one of the fairest plants that grow on our soil," muttered Lawton; "a flower fit to be placed in the bosom of any man?"

"If he be not more accommodating as a husband than as a patient, John, I fear me that the lady will lead a troubled life."

"Let her," said the trooper, indignantly; "she has chosen from her country's enemies, and may she meet with a foreigner's virtues in her choice."

Further conversation was interrupted by Miss Peyton, who, advancing, acquainted them that they had been invited to grace the nuptials of her eldest niece and Colonel Wellmere. The gentlemen bowed; and the good aunt, with an inherent love of propriety, went on to add that the acquaintance was of an old date, and the attachment by no means a sudden thing. To this Lawton merely bowed still more ceremoniously; but the surgeon, who loved to hold converse with the virgin, replied:

"That the human mind was differently constituted in different individuals. In some, impressions are vivid and transitory; in others, more deep and lasting; indeed, there are some philosophers who pretend to trace a connection between the physical and mental powers of the animal; but, for my part, madam, I believe that the one is much influenced by habit and association, and the other subject altogether to the peculiar laws of matter."

Miss Peyton, in her turn, bowed her silent assent to this remark, and retired, with dignity, to usher the intended bride into the presence of the company. The hour had arrived when American custom had decreed that the vow of wedlock must be exchanged; and Sarah, blushing with a variety of emotions, followed her aunt to the drawing-room. Wellmere sprang to receive the hand that, with an averted face, she extended toward him, and, for the first time, the English colonel appeared fully conscious of the important part that he was to act in the approaching ceremony. Hitherto his air had been abstracted and his manner uneasy; but everything, excepting the certainty of his bliss, seemed to vanish at the blaze of loveliness that now burst on his sight. All arose from their seats, and the reverend gentleman had already opened the sacred volume, when the absence of Frances was noticed; Miss Peyton withdrew in search of her youngest niece, whom she found in her own apartment, and in tears.

"Come, my love, the ceremony waits but for us," said the aunt, affectionately entwining her arm in that of her niece;

"endeavor to compose yourself, that proper honor may be done to the choice of your sister."

"Is he—can he be worthy of her?"

"Can he be otherwise?" returned Miss Peyton; "is he not a gentleman? a gallant soldier, though an unfortunate one? and certainly, my love, one who appears every way qualified to make any woman happy."

Frances had given vent to her feelings, and, with an effort, she collected sufficient resolution to venture to join the party below. But to relieve the embarrassment of this delay, the clergyman had put sundry questions to the bridegroom, one of which was by no means answered to his satisfaction. Wellmere was compelled to acknowledge that he was unprovided with a ring; and to perform the marriage ceremony without one the divine pronounced to be canonically impossible. His appeal to Mr. Wharton, for the propriety of this decision, was answered affirmatively, as it would have negatively, had the question been put in a manner to lead to such a result. The owner of the Locusts had lost the little energy he possessed, by the blow recently received through his son, and his assent to the objection of the clergyman was as easily obtained as had been his consent to the premature proposals of Wellmere. In this stage of the dilemma Miss Peyton and Frances appeared. The surgeon of dragoons approached the former, and as he handed her to a chair, observed:

"It appears, madam, that untoward circumstances have prevented Colonel Wellmere from providing all of the decorations that custom, antiquity, and the canons of the Church have prescribed as indispensable to enter into the honorable state of wedlock."

Miss Peyton glanced her quiet eye at the uneasy bridegroom, and perceiving him to be adorned with what she thought sufficient splendor, allowing for the time and the suddenness of the occasion, she turned her look on the speaker, as if to demand an explanation.

The surgeon understood her wishes, and proceeded at once to gratify them.

"There is," he observed, "an opinion prevalent that the heart lies on the left side of the body, and that the connection between the members of that side and what may be called the seat of life is more intimate than that which exists with their opposites. But this is an error that grows out of an ignorance of the organic arrangement of the human frame. In obedience to this opinion, the fourth finger of the left hand is thought to contain a virtue that belongs to no other branch of that digitated member; and it is ordinarily encircled, during the solemnization of wedlock, with a cincture or ring, as if to chain that affection to the marriage state which is best secured by the graces of the female character." While speaking the operator laid his hand expressively on his heart, and he bowed nearly to the floor when he had concluded.

"I know not, sir, that I rightfully understand your meaning," said Miss Peyton, whose want of comprehension was sufficiently excusable.

"A ring, madam—a ring is wanting for the ceremony."

The instant that the surgeon spoke explicitly the awkwardness of the situation was understood. She glanced her eyes at her nieces, and in the younger she read a secret exultation that somewhat displeased her; but the countenance of Sarah was suffused with a shame that the considerate aunt well understood. Not for the world would she violate any of the observances of female etiquette. It suggested itself to all the females at the same moment that the wedding ring of the late mother and sister was reposing peacefully amid the rest of her jewelry in a secret receptacle that had been provided at an early day to secure the valuables against the predatory inroads of the marauders who roamed through the country. Into this hidden vault the plate, and whatever was most prized, made a nightly retreat, and there the ring in question had long lain, forgotten until at this moment.

But it was the business of the bridegroom, from time immemorial, to furnish this indispensable to wedlock, and on no account would Miss Peyton do anything

that transcended the usual reserve of the sex on this solemn occasion; certainly not until sufficient expiation for the offense had been made by a due portion of trouble and disquiet. This material fact, therefore, was not disclosed by either; the aunt consulting female propriety; the bride yielding to shame; and Frances rejoicing that an embarrassment, proceeding from almost any cause, should delay her sister's vow. It was reserved for Dr. Sitgreaves to interrupt the awkward silence.

"If, madam, a plain ring, that once belonged to a sister of my own——" He paused, and hemmed—"If, madam, a ring of that description might be admitted to this honor, I have one that could be easily produced from my quarters at the Corners, and I doubt not it would fit the finger for which it is desired. There is a strong resemblance between—hem—between my late sister and Miss Wharton, in stature and anatomical figure; and, in all eligible subjects, the proportions are apt to be observed throughout the whole animal economy."

A glance of Miss Peyton's eye recalled Colonel Wellmere to a sense of his duty, and springing from his chair, he assured the surgeon that in no way could he confer a greater obligation on himself than by sending for that very ring. The operator bowed a little haughtily, and withdrew to fulfill his promise, by dispatching a messenger on the errand. The aunt suffered him to retire, but unwillingness to admit a stranger into the privacy of their domestic arrangements, induced her to follow and tender the services of Cæsar instead of those of Sitgreaves's man, who had volunteered for this duty. Katy Haynes was accordingly directed to summon the black to the vacant parlor, and thither Miss Peyton and the surgeon repaired, to give their several instructions.

The consent to this sudden union of Sarah and Wellmere, and especially at a time when the life of a member of the family was in such imminent jeopardy, was given from a conviction that the unsettled state of the country would prob-

ably prevent another opportunity of the lovers meeting, and a secret dread, on the part of Mr. Wharton, that the death of his son might, by hastening his own, leave his remaining children without a protector. But notwithstanding Miss Peyton had complied with her brother's wish to profit by the accidental visit of a divine, she had not thought it necessary to blazon the intended nuptials of her niece to the neighborhood, had even time been allowed; she thought, therefore, that she was now communicating a profound secret to the negro and her housekeeper.

"Cæsar," she commenced, with a smile, "you are now to learn that your young mistress, Miss Sarah, is to be united to Colonel Wellmere this evening."

"I tink I see him afore," said Cæsar, chuckling; "old black man can tell when a young lady make up her mind."

"Really, Cæsar, I find I have never given you credit for half the observation that you deserve; but as you already know on what emergency your services are required, listen to the directions of this gentleman, and take care to observe them strictly."

The black turned in quiet submission to the surgeon, who commenced as follows:

"Cæsar, your mistress has already acquainted you with the important event about to be solemnized within this habitation; but a cincture or ring is wanting to encircle the finger of the bride; a custom derived from the ancients, and which has been continued in the marriage forms of several branches of the Christian Church, and which is even, by a species of typical wedlock, used in the installation of prelates, as you doubtless understand."

"Pr'aps massa doctor will say him over ag'in," interrupted the old negro, whose memory began to fail him, just as the other made so confident an allusion to his power of comprehension; "I tink I get him by heart dis time."

"It is impossible to gather honey from a rock, Cæsar, and therefore I will abridge the little I have to say. Ride to the Four Corners, and present this note to Sergeant Hollister, or to Mrs. Elizabeth Flanagan, either of whom will furnish the

necessary pledge of connubial affection ; and return forthwith."

The letter which the surgeon put into the hands of his messenger, as he ceased, was conceived in the following terms :

"If the fever has left Kinder, give him nourishment. Take three ounces more of blood from Watson. Have a search made that the woman Flanagan has left none of her jugs of alcohol in the hospital. Renew the dressings of Johnson, and dismiss Smith to duty. Send the ring which is pendant from the chain of the watch that I left with you to time the doses by the bearer.

"ARCHIBALD SITGREAVES, M.D.,
"Surgeon of Dragoons."

"Cæsar," said Katy, when she was alone with the black, "put the ring, when you get it, in your left pocket, for that is nearest your heart ; and by no means endeavor to try it on your finger, for it is unlucky."

"Try um on he finger?" interrupted the negro, stretching forth his bony knuckles ; "tink a Miss Sally's ring go on old Cæsar's finger?"

"'Tis not consequential whether it goes on or not," said the housekeeper, "but it is an evil omen to place a marriage ring on the finger of another after wedlock, and of course it may be dangerous before."

"I tell you, Katy, I neber tink to put um on a finger."

"Go, then, Cæsar, and do not forget the left pocket ; be careful to take off your hat as you pass the graveyard, and be expeditious, for nothing, I am certain, can be more trying to the patience than thus to be waiting for the ceremony when a body has fully made up her mind to marry."

With this injunction, Cæsar quitted the house, and he was soon firmly fixed in the saddle. From his youth, the black, like all of his race, had been a hard rider ; but, bending under the weight of sixty winters, his African blood had lost some of its native heat. The night was dark, and the wind whistled through the vale with the dreariness of November. When Cæsar reached the graveyard he uncovered

his grizzled head with superstitious awe, and he threw around him many a fearful glance, in momentary expectation of seeing something superhuman. There was sufficient light to discern a being of earthly mold stealing from among the graves, apparently with a design to enter the highway. It is in vain that philosophy and reason contend with early impressions, and poor Cæsar was even without the support of either of these frail allies. He was, however, well mounted on a coach-horse of Mr. Wharton's, and, clinging to the back of the animal with instinctive skill, he abandoned the rein to the beast. Hills, woods, rocks, fences, and houses flew by him with the rapidity of lightning, and the black had just begun to think whither and on what business he was riding in this headlong manner, when he reached the place where the roads met, and the "Hotel Flanagan" stood before him in its dilapidated simplicity. The sight of a cheerful fire first told the negro that he had reached the habitation of a man, and with it came all his dread of the bloody Virginians ;—his duty must, however, be done, and, dismounting, he fastened the foaming animal to a fence, and approached the window with cautious steps, to reconnoiter.

Before a blazing fire sat Sergeant Hollister and Betty Flanagan, enjoying themselves over a liberal potation.

"I tell yee, sargeant dear," said Betty, removing the mug from her mouth, "'tis no rasonable to think it was more than the pidler himself ; sure now where was the smell of sulphur, and the wings, and the tail, and the cloven foot?—besides, sargeant, it's no dacent to tell a lone female that she had Beelzebub for a bedfellow."

"It matters but little, Mrs. Flanagan, provided you escape his talons and fangs hereafter," returned the veteran, following the remark by a heavy draught.

Cæsar heard enough to convince him that little danger from this pair was to be apprehended. His teeth already began to chatter, and the cold without and the comfort within stimulated him greatly to enter. He made his approaches with

proper caution, and knocked with extreme humility. The appearance of Hollister with a drawn sword roughly demanding who was without, contributed in no degree to the restoration of his faculties; but fear itself lent him power to explain his errand.

"Advance," said the sergeant, throwing a look of close scrutiny on the black, as he brought him to the light; "advance and deliver your dispatches; have you the countersign?"

"I don't tink he know what dat be," said the black, shaking in his shoes, "dough massa dat sent me gib me many things to carry dat he little understand."

"Who ordered you on this duty, did you say?"

"Well, it war he doctor heself, so he come up on a gallop as he always do on a doctor's errand."

"'Twas Dr. Sitgreaves; he never knows the countersign himself. Now, blackey, had it been Captain Lawton, he would not have sent you here, close to a sentinel, without the countersign; for you might get a pistol bullet through your head, and that would be cruel to you; for although you be black, I am none of them who think niggers have no souls."

"Sure a nagur has as much sowl as a white," said Betty; "come hither, ould man, and warm that shivering carcass of yeers by the blaze of this fire. I'm sure a Guinea nagur loves hate as much as a souldier loves his drop."

Cæsar obeyed in silence, and a mulatto boy, who was sleeping on a bench in the room, was bidden to convey the note of the surgeon to the building where the wounded were quartered.

"Here," said the washerwoman, tendering to Cæsar a taste of the article that most delighted herself, "try a drop, smooty; 'twill warm the black sowl within your crazy body, and be giving you spirits as you are going homeward."

"I tell you, Elizabeth," said the sergeant, "that the souls of niggers are the same as our own; how often have I heard the good Mr. Whitefield say that there was no distinction of color in heaven. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that

the soul of this here black is as white as my own, or even Major Dunwoodie's."

"Be sure he be," cried Cæsar, a little tartly, whose courage had revived by tasting the drop of Mrs. Flanagan.

"It's a good sowl that the major is, anyway," returned the washerwoman; "and a kind sowl—ay, and a brave sowl, too; and ye'll say all that yeerself, sergeant, I'm thinking."

"For the matter of that," returned the veteran, "there is one above even Washington, to judge of souls; but this I will say, that Major Dunwoodie is a gentleman who never says, Go, boys—but always says, Come, boys; and if a poor fellow is in want of a spur or a martingale, and the leather-whack is gone, there is never wanting the real silver to make up the loss, and that from his own pocket, too."

"Why, then, are you here idle when all that he holds most dear are in danger?" cried a voice, with startling abruptness; "Mount, mount, and follow your captain; arm and mount, and that instantly, or you will be too late!"

This unexpected interruption produced an instantaneous confusion among the tipplers. Cæsar fled instinctively into the fireplace, where he maintained his position in defiance of a heat that would have roasted a white man. Sergeant Hollister turned promptly on his heel, and seizing his saber, the steel was glittering by the firelight in the twinkling of an eye; but perceiving the intruder to be the peddler, who stood near the open door that lead to the lean-to in the rear, he began to fall back toward the position of the black, with a military intuition that taught him to concentrate his forces. Betty alone stood her ground by the side of the temporary table. Replenishing the mug with a large addition of the article known to the soldiery by the name of "choke-dog," she held it toward the peddler. The eyes of the washerwoman had for some time been swimming with love and liquor, and turning them good-naturedly on Birch, she cried:

"Faith, but yee're wilcome, Mister Piddler, or Mister Birch, or Mister Beelzeboob, or what's yer name. Yee're an honest

divil, anyway, and I'm hoping that you found the petticoats convenient. Come forward, dear, and fale the fire; Sergeant Hollister won't be hurting you, for the fear of an ill turn you may be doing him hereafter—will ye, sergeant, dear?"

"Depart, ungodly man!" cried the veteran, edging still nearer to Cæsar, but lifting his legs alternately as they scorched with the heat; "depart in peace! There is none here for thy service, and you seek the woman in vain. There is a tender mercy that will save her from thy talons." The sergeant ceased to utter aloud, but the motion on his lips continued, and a few scattering words of prayer were alone audible.

The brain of the washerwoman was in such a state of confusion that she did not clearly comprehend the meaning of her suitor, but a new idea struck her imagination, and she broke forth:

"If it's me the man saaks, where's the matter, pray? am I not a widowed body, and my own property? And you talk of tinderness, sergeant; but it's little I see of it any way; who knows but Mr. Beelzeboob here is free to spake his mind? I'm sure it is willing to hear it I am."

"Woman," said the peddler, "be silent; and you, foolish man, mount—arm and mount, and fly to the rescue of your officer, if you are worthy of the cause in which you serve, and would not disgrace the coat you wear." The peddler vanished from the sight of the bewildered trio with a rapidity that left them uncertain whither he had fled.

On hearing the voice of an old friend, Cæsar emerged from his corner, and fearlessly advanced to the spot where Betty had resolutely maintained her ground, though in a state of utter mental confusion.

"I wish Harvey stop," said the black; "if he ride down a road, I should like be company;—I don't think Johnny Birch hurt he own son."

"Poor ignorant wretch!" exclaimed the veteran, recovering his voice with a long-drawn breath; "think you that figure was made of flesh and blood?"

"Harvey ain't fleshy," replied the black, "but he berry clobber man."

"Pooh! sargeant dear," exclaimed the washerwoman, "talk rason for once, and mind what the knowing one tells yee; call out the boys, and ride a bit after Captain Jack; rimimber, darling, that he told yee, the day, to be in readiness to mount at a moment's warning."

"Ay, but not at a summons from the foul fiend. Let Captain Lawton, or Lieutenant Mason, or Cornet Skipworth say the word, and who is quicker in the saddle than I?"

"Well, sargeant, how often is it that yee've boasted to myself that the corps wasn't a bit afeard to face the divil?"

"No more are we, in battle array, and by daylight; but it's foolhardy and irreverent to tempt Satan, and on such a night as this; listen how the wind whistles through the trees; and hark! there is howling of evil spirits abroad."

"I see him," said Cæsar, opening his eyes to a width that might have embraced more than an ideal form.

"Where?" interrupted the sergeant, instinctively laying his hand on the hilt of his sabre.

"No—no," said the black, "I see a Johnny Birch come out of he grave—Johnny walk afore he buried."

"Ah! then he must have led an evil life, indeed," said Hollister; "the blessed in spirit lie quiet until the general muster, but wickedness disturbs the soul in this life as well as in that which is to come."

"And what is to come of Captain Jack?" cried Betty, angrily; "is it yee orders that yee won't mind, nor a warning given? I'll jist git my cart, and ride down and tell him that yee're afeard of a dead man and Beelzeboob, and it isn't succor he may be expicting from yee. I wonder who'll be the orderly of the troop to-morrow, then?—his name won't be Hollister, any way."

"Nay, Betty, nay," said the sergeant, laying his hand familiarly on her shoulder; "if there must be riding to-night, let it be by him whose duty it is to call out the men and to set an example. The Lord

have mercy, and send us enemies of flesh and blood !”

Another glass confirmed the veteran in a resolution that was only excited by the dread of his captain's displeasure, and he proceeded to summon the dozen men who had been left under his command. The boy arriving with the ring, Cæsar placed it carefully in the pocket of his waistcoat next his heart, and, mounting, shut his eyes, seized his charger by the mane, and continued in a state of comparative insensibility until the animal stopped at the door of the warm stable whence he had started.

The movements of the dragoons, being timed to the order of a march, were much slower, for they were made with a watchfulness that was intended to guard against surprise from the evil one himself.

CHAPTER XXII.

Be not your tongue thy own shame's orator ;
Look sweet, speak fair, become disloyalty ;
Apparel vice like virtue's harbinger.

—COMEDY OF ERRORS.

THE situation of the party in Mr. Wharton's dwelling was sufficiently awkward during the hour of Cæsar's absence ; for such was the astonishing rapidity displayed by his courser, that the four miles of road was gone over, and the events we have recorded had occurred somewhat within that period of time. Of course, the gentlemen strove to make the irksome moments fly as swiftly as possible ; but premeditated happiness is certainly of the least joyous kind. The bride and bridegroom are immemorially privileged to be dull, and but few of their friends seemed disposed, on the present occasion, to dishonor their example. The English colonel exhibited a proper portion of uneasiness at this unexpected interruption of his felicity, and he sat with a varying countenance by the side of Sarah, who seemed to be profiting by the delay to gather fortitude for the solemn ceremony. In the midst of this embarrassing silence, Dr. Sitgreaves addressed himself to Miss Peyton, by whose side he had contrived to procure a chair.

“Marriage, madam, is pronounced to be honorable in the sight of God and man ; and it may be said to be reduced, in the present age, to the laws of nature and reason. The ancients, in sanctioning polygamy, lost sight of the provisions of nature, and condemned thousands to misery ; but with the increase of science have grown the wise ordinances of society, which ordain that man should be the husband of but one woman.”

Wellmere glanced a fierce expression of disgust at the surgeon that indicated his sense of the tediousness of the other's remarks ; while Miss Peyton, with a slight hesitation, as if fearful of touching on forbidden subjects, replied :

“I had thought, sir, that we were indebted to the Christian religion for our morals on this subject.”

“True, madam, it is somewhere provided in the prescriptions of the apostles that the sexes should henceforth be on an equality in this particular. But in what degree could polygamy affect holiness of life ? It was probably a wise arrangement of Paul, who was much of a scholar, and probably had frequent conferences on this important subject with Luke, whom we all know to have been bred to the practice of medicine——”

There is no telling how far the discursive fancy of Sitgreaves might have led him on this subject, had he not been interrupted. But Lawton, who had been a close though silent observer of all that passed, profited by the hint to ask, abruptly—

“Pray, Colonel Wellmere, in what manner is bigamy punished in England ?”

The bridegroom started, and his lip blanched. Recovering himself, however, on the instant, he answered, with a suavity that became so happy a man :

“Death !—as such an offense merits,” he said.

“Death and dissection,” continued the operator ; “it is seldom that the law loses sight of eventual utility in a malefactor. Bigamy, in a man, is a heinous offense !”

“More so than celibacy ?” asked Lawton.

“More so,” returned the surgeon, with

undisturbed simplicity ; “ he who remains in a single state may devote his life to science and the extension of knowledge, if not of his species ; but the wretch who profits by the constitutional tendency of the female sex to credulity and tenderness, incurs the wickedness of a positive sin, heightened by the baseness of deception.”

“ Really, sir, the ladies are infinitely obliged to you, for attributing folly to them as part of their nature.”

“ Captain Lawton, in man the animal is more nobly formed than in woman. The nerves are endowed with less sensibility ; the whole frame is less pliable and yielding ; is it, therefore, surprising, that a tendency to rely on the faith of her partner is more natural to woman than to the other sex ? ”

Wellmere, as if unable to listen with any degree of patience to so ill-timed a dialogue, sprang from his seat, and paced the floor in disorder. Pitying his situation, the reverend gentleman, who was patiently awaiting the return of Cæsar, changed the discourse, and a few minutes brought the black himself. The billet was handed to Dr. Sitgreaves ; for Miss Peyton had expressly enjoined Cæsar not to implicate her, in any manner, in the errand on which he was dispatched. The note contained a summary statement of the several subjects of the surgeon’s directions, and referred him to the black for the ring. The latter was instantly demanded, and promptly delivered. A transient look of melancholy clouded the brow of the surgeon, as he stood a moment and gazed silently on the bauble ; nor did he remember the place, or the occasion, while he soliloquized as follows :

“ Poor Anna ! gay as innocence and youth could make thee was thy heart, when this cincture was formed to grace thy nuptials ; but ere the hour had come, God had taken thee to himself. Years have passed, my sister, but never have I forgotten the companion of my infancy ! ” He advanced to Sarah, and, unconscious of observation, placing the ring on her finger, continued—“ She for whom it was intended has long been in her grave, and

the youth who bestowed the gift soon followed her sainted spirit ; take it, madam, and God grant that it may be an instrument in making you as happy as you deserve ! ”

Sarah felt a chill at her heart as this burst of feeling escaped the surgeon ; but Wellmere offering his hand, she was led before the divine, and the ceremony began. The first words of this imposing office produced a dead stillness in the apartment ; and the minister of God proceeded to the solemn exhortation, and witnessed the plighted troth of the parties, when the investiture was to follow. The ring had been left, from inadvertency and the agitation of the moment, on the finger where Sitgreaves had placed it ;—the slight interruption occasioned by the circumstance was over, and the clergyman was about to proceed, when a figure gliding into the midst of the party, at once put a stop to the ceremony. It was the peddler. His look was bitter and ironical, while a finger, raised toward the divine, seemed to forbid the ceremony to go any further.

“ Can Colonel Wellmere waste the precious moments here, when his wife has crossed the ocean to meet him ? The nights are long, and the moon bright ;—a few hours will take him to the city.”

Aghast at the suddenness of this extraordinary address, Wellmere for the moment lost the command of his faculties. To Sarah the countenance of Birch, expressive as it was, produced no terror ; but the instant she recovered from the surprise of his interruption, she turned her anxious gaze on the features of the man to whom she had just pledged her troth. They afforded the most terrible confirmation of all that the peddler affirmed ; the room whirled round, and she fell lifeless into the arms of her aunt. There is an instinctive delicacy in woman that seems to conquer all other emotions ; and the insensible bride was immediately conveyed from sight, leaving the room to the sole possession of the other sex.

The confusion enabled the peddler to retreat with a rapidity that would have baffled pursuit, had any been attempted,

and Wellmere stood with every eye fixed on him, in ominous silence.

"'Tis false—'tis false as hell!" he cried, striking his forehead. "I have ever denied her claim; nor will the laws of my country compel me to acknowledge it."

"But what will conscience and the laws of God do?" asked Lawton.

"'Tis well, sir," said Wellmere, haughtily, and retreating toward the door; "my situation protects you now; but a time may come—"

He had reached the entry, when a slight tap on his shoulder caused him to turn his head; it was Captain Lawton, who, with a smile of peculiar meaning, beckoned him to follow. The state of Wellmere's mind was such that he would gladly have gone anywhere to avoid the gaze of horror and detestation that glared from every eye he met. They reached the stables before the trooper spoke, when he cried aloud:

"Bring out Roanoke!"

His man appeared with the steed caparisoned for his master. Lawton, coolly throwing the bridle on the neck of the animal, took his pistols from the holsters and continued—"Here are weapons that have seen good service before to-day—ay, and in honorable hands, sir. These were the pistols of my father, Colonel Wellmere; he used them with credit in the wars with France, and gave them to me to fight the battles of my country with. In what better way can I serve her than in exterminating a wretch who would have blasted one of her fairest daughters?"

"This injurious treatment shall meet with its reward," cried the other, seizing the offered weapon; "the blood lie on the head of him who sought it!"

"Amen! but hold a moment, sir. You are now free, and the passports of Washington are in your pocket; I give you the fire; if I fall, there is a steed that will outstrip pursuit; and I would advise you to retreat without much delay, for even Archibald Sitgreaves would fight in such a cause—nor will the guard above be very apt to give quarter."

"Are you ready?" asked Wellmere, gnashing his teeth with rage.

"Stand forward, Tom, with the lights;—fire!"

Wellmere fired, and the bullion flew from the epaulette of the trooper.

"Now the turn is mine," said Lawton, deliberately leveling a pistol.

"And mine!" shouted a voice, as the weapon was struck from his hand. "By all the devils in hell, 'tis the mad Virginian!—fall on, my boys, and take him; this is a prize not hoped for!"

Unarmed and surprised as he was, Lawton's presence of mind did not desert him; he felt that he was in the hands of those from whom he was to expect no mercy; and, as four of the Skinners fell upon him at once, he used his gigantic strength to the utmost. Three of the band grasped him by the neck and arms, with an intent to clog his efforts and pinion him with ropes. The first of these he threw from him with a violence that sent him against the building, where he lay stunned with the blow. But the fourth seized his legs; and, unable to contend with such odds, the trooper came to the earth, bringing with him all of his assailants. The struggle on the ground was short but terrific; curses and the most dreadful imprecations were uttered by the Skinners, who in vain called on more of their band, who were gazing on the combat in nerveless horror, to assist. A difficulty of breathing from one of the combatants was heard, accompanied by the stifled moanings of a strangled man; and directly one of the group arose on his feet, shaking himself free from the wild grasp of the others. Both Wellmere and the servant of Lawton had fled; the former to the stables, and the latter to give the alarm, leaving all in darkness. The figure that stood erect sprang into the saddle of the unheeded charger; sparks of fire, issuing from the armed feet of the horse, gave a momentary light by which the captain was seen dashing like the wind toward the highway.

"By hell, he's off!" cried the leader, hoarse with rage and exhaustion; "fire!—bring him down—fire, or you'll be too late."

The order was obeyed, and one mo-

ment of suspense followed, in the vain hope of hearing the huge frame of Lawton tumbling from his steed.

"He would not fall if you had killed him," muttered one; "I've known these Virginians sit their horses with two or three balls through them; ay, even after they were dead."

A freshening of the wind wafted the tread of a horse down the valley, which, by its speed, gave assurance of a rider governing its motion.

"These trained horses always stop when the rider falls," observed one of the gang.

"Then," cried the leader, striking his musket on the ground in a rage, "the fellow is safe!—to your business at once. A short half-hour will bring down that canting sergeant and the guard upon us. 'Twill be lucky if the guns don't turn them out. Quick, to your posts, and fire the house in the chambers; smoking ruins are good to cover evil deeds."

"What is to be done with this lump of earth?" cried another, pushing the body that yet lay insensible where it had been hurled by the arm of Lawton; "a little rubbing would bring him to."

"Let him lie," said the leader, fiercely; "had he been half a man that dragooning rascal would have been in my power;—enter the house, I say, and fire the chambers. We can't go amiss here—there is plate and money enough to make you all gentlemen—and revenge, too."

The idea of silver in any way was not to be resisted; and leaving their companion, who began to show faint signs of life, they rushed tumultuously toward the dwelling. Wellmere availed himself of the opportunity, and, stealing from the stables with his own charger, he was able to gain the highway unnoticed. For an instant he hesitated, whether to ride toward the point where he knew the guard was stationed, and endeavor to rescue the family, or, profiting by his liberty, and the exchange that had been effected by the divine, to seek the royal army. Shame, and a consciousness of guilt, determined him to take the latter course, and he rode towards New York, stung with the re-

flection of his own baseness, and harassed with the apprehension of meeting with an enraged woman, that he had married during his late visit to England, but whose claims, as soon as his passion was sated, he had resolved never willingly to admit. In the tumult and agitation of the moment, the retreat of Lawton and Wellmere was but little noticed; the condition of Mr. Wharton demanded the care and consolation of both the surgeon and the divine. The report of the firearms first roused the family to the sense of a new danger, and but a moment elapsed before the leader, and one more of the gang, entered the room.

"Surrender! you servants of King George," shouted the leader, presenting his musket to the breast of Sitgreaves, "or I will let a little Tory blood from your veins."

"Gently—gently, my friend," said the surgeon; "you are doubtless more expert in inflicting wounds than in healing them; the weapon that you hold so indiscreetly is extremely dangerous to animal life."

"Yield, or take its contents."

"Why and wherefore should I yield? I am a non-combatant. The articles of capitulation must be arranged with Captain John Lawton; though yielding, I believe, is not a subject on which you will find him particularly complying."

The fellow had by this time taken such a survey of the group as convinced him that little danger was to be apprehended from resistance, and eager to seize his share of the plunder, he dropped his musket, and was soon busy, with the assistance of his men, in arranging divers articles of plate in bags. The cottage now presented a singular spectacle—the ladies were gathered around Sarah, who yet continued insensible, in one of the rooms that had escaped the notice of the marauders. Mr. Wharton sat in a state of perfect imbecility, listening to, but not profiting by, the unmeaning words of comfort that fell from the lips of the clergyman. Singleton was lying on a sofa, shaking with debility, and inattentive to surrounding objects; while the surgeon was administering restoratives and look-

ing at the dressings with a coolness that mocked the tumult. Cæsar and the attendant of Captain Singleton had retreated to the wood in the rear of the cottage, and Katy Haynes was flying about the building, busily employed in forming a bundle of valuables, from which, with the most scrupulous honesty, she rejected every article that was not really and truly her own.

But to return to the party at the Four Corners. When the veteran had got his men mounted and under arms, a restless desire to participate in the glory and dangers of the expedition came over the washerwoman. Whether she was impelled to the undertaking by a dread of remaining alone, or a wish to hasten in person to the relief of her favorite, we will not venture to assert; but, as Hollister was giving the orders to wheel and march, the voice of Betty was heard, exclaiming:

"Stop a bit, sargeant, dear, till two of the boys git out the cart, and I'll just ride wid yee; 'tis like there'll be wounded, and it will be mighty convenient to bring them home in."

Although inwardly much pleased with any cause of delay to a service that he so little relished, Hollister affected some displeasure at the detention.

"Nothing but a cannon ball can take one of my lads from his charger," he said; "and it's not very likely that we shall have as fair fighting as cannon and musketry, in a business of the evil one's inventing; so, Elizabeth, you may go if you will, but the cart will not be wanting."

"Now, sargeant dear, you lie, any way," said Betty, who was somewhat unduly governed by her potations; "and wasn't Captain Singleton shot off his horse but tin days gone by? ay, and Captain Jack himself, too; and didn't he lie on the ground, face uppermost, and back downward, looking grim? and didn't the boys tink him dead, and turn and lave the reg'lars the day?"

"You lie back again," cried the sargeant, fiercely; "and so does anyone who says that we didn't gain the day."

"For a bit or so—only I mane for a bit or so," said the washerwoman; "but

Major Dunwoodie turned you, and so you licked the reg'lars. But the captain it was that fell, and I'm thinking that there's no better rider going; so, sargeant, it's the cart will be convenient. Here, two of you, jist hitch the mare to the tills, and it's no whiskey that ye'll be wanting the morrow; and put the piece of Jenny's hide under the pad; the baste is never the better for the rough ways of the county Westchester." The consent of the sargeant being obtained, the equipage of Mrs. Flanagan was soon in readiness to receive its burthen.

"As it is quite uncertain whether we shall be attacked in front or rear," said Hollister, "five of you shall march in advance, and the remainder shall cover our retreat toward the barracks, should we be pressed. 'Tis an awful moment to a man of little learning, Elizabeth, to command in such a service; for my part, I wish devoutly that one of the officers were here; but my trust is in the Lord."

"Pooh! man, away wid yee," said the washerwoman, who had got herself comfortably seated; "the divil a bit of an inimy is there near. March on, hurry-scurry, and let the mare trot, or it's but little that Captain Jack will thank yee for the help."

"Although unlearned in matters of communicating with spirits, or laying the dead, Mrs. Flanagan," said the veteran, "I have not served through the old war, and five years in this, not to know how to guard the baggage. Doesn't Washington always cover the baggage? I am not to be told my duty by a camp follower. Fall in as you are ordered, and dress, men."

"Well, march, any way," cried the impatient washerwoman; "the black is there already, and it's tardy the captain will think yee."

"Are you sure that it was really a black man that brought the order?" said the sargeant, dropped in between the platoons, where he could converse with Betty and be at hand to lead on an emergency, either on an advance or on a retreat.

"Fay—and I'm sure of nothing, dear. But why don't the boys prick their horses and jog a trot? the mare is mighty unasy,

and it's no warm in this cursed valley, riding as much like a funeral party as old rags is to continental."*

"Fairly and softly, ay, and prudently, Mrs. Flanagan; it's not rashness that makes the good officer. If we have to encounter a spirit, it's more than likely he'll make his attack by surprise; horses are not very powerful in the dark, and I have a character to lose, good woman."

"Caractur! and isn't it caractur and life too that Captain Jack has to lose?"

"Halt!" cried the sergeant; "what is that lurking near the foot of the rock, on the left?"

"Sure, it's nothing, unless it be a matter of Captain Jack's sowl that's come to hunt yee, for not being brisker on the march."

"Betty, your levity makes you an unfit comrade for such an expedition. Advance, one of you, and reconnoiter the spot;—draw swords!—rear rank, close to the front!"

"Pshaw!" shouted Betty, "is it a big fool or a big coward that yee are? Jist wheel from the road, boys, and I'll shove the mare down upon it in the twinkling of an eye—and it's no ghost that I fear."

By this time one of the men had returned, and declared there was nothing to prevent their advancing, and the party continued their march, but with great deliberation and caution.

"Courage and prudence are the jewels of a soldier, Mrs. Flanagan," said the sergeant; "without the one, the other may be said to be good for nothing."

"Prudence without courage: is it *that* you mane?—and it's so that I'm thinking myself, sargeant. This baste pulls tight on the reins, anyway."

"Be patient, good woman;—hark! what is that?" said Hollister, pricking up his ears at the report of Wellmere's pistol; "I'll swear that was a human pistol, and one from our regiment. Rear rank, close

The paper money issued by congress was familiarly called continental money. This term "continental" was applied to the army, the congress, the ships of war, and, in short, to almost everything of interest which belonged to the new government. It would seem to have been invented as the opposite of the insular position of the mother country.

to the front! Mrs. Flanagan, I must leave you." So saying, having recovered all his faculties by hearing a sound that he understood, he placed himself at the head of his men with an air of military pride that the darkness prevented the washerwoman from beholding. A volley of musketry now rattled in the night wind, and the sergeant exclaimed:

"March!—quick time!"

The next instant the trampling of a horse was heard coming up the road, at a rate that announced a matter of life or death; and Hollister again halted his party, riding a short distance in front himself, to meet the rider.

"Stand!—who goes there?" shouted Hollister.

"Ha! Hollister, is it you?" cried Lawton; "ever ready and at your post; but where is the guard?"

"At hand, sir, and ready to follow you through thick and thin," said the veteran, relieved at once from responsibility, and as eager as a boy to be led against his enemy.

"'Tis well!" said the trooper, riding up to his men; then speaking a few words of encouragement, he led them down the valley at a rate but little less rapid than his approach. The miserable horse of the sutler was soon distanced, and Betty, thus thrown out in the chase, turned to the side of the road, and observed:

"There—it's no difficult to tell that Captain Jack is wid 'em, any way; and away they go like so many nagur boys to a husking frolic;—well, I'll just hitch the mare to this bit of a fence, and walk down and see the sport afoot—it's no rasonable to expose the baste to be hurted."

Led on by Lawton, the men followed, destitute alike of fear and reflection. Whether it was a party of the refugees, or a detachment from the royal army, that they were to assail, they were profoundly ignorant; but they knew that the officer in advance was distinguished for courage and personal prowess; and these are virtues that are sure to captivate the thoughtless soldiery. On arriving near the gates of the Locusts, the trooper halted his party, and made his arrange-

ments for the assault. Dismounting, he ordered eight of his men to follow his example, and turning to Hollister, said:

"Stand you here, and guard the horses; if anything attempt to pass, stop it, or cut it down, and ——" The flames at this moment burst through the dormer-window and cedar roof of the cottage, and a bright light glared on the darkness of the night. "On!" shouted the trooper, "on!—give quarter when you have done justice!"

There was a startling fierceness in the voice of the trooper that reached to the heart, even amid the horrors of the cottage. The leader of the Skinners dropped his plunder, and, for a moment, he stood in nerveless dread; then rushing to a window he threw up the sash;—at this instant Lawton entered, saber in hand, into the apartment.

"Die, miscreant!" cried the trooper, cleaving a marauder to the jaw; but the leader sprang into the lawn, and escaped his vengeance. The shrieks of the females restored Lawton to his presence of mind, and the earnest entreaty of the divine induced him to attend to the safety of the family. One more of the gang fell in with the dragoons, and met his death; but the remainder had taken the alarm in season. Occupied with Sarah, neither Miss Singleton, nor the ladies of the house, had discovered the entrance of the Skinners, though the flames were raging around them with a fury that threatened the building with rapid destruction. The shrieks of Katy and the terrified consort of Cæsar, together with the noise and uproar in the adjacent apartment, first roused Miss Peyton and Isabella to a sense of their danger.

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed the alarmed aunt; "there is a dreadful confusion in the house, and there will be bloodshed in consequence of the affair."

"There are none to fight," returned Isabella, with a face paler than that of the other; "Dr. Sitgreaves is very peaceable in his disposition and surely Captain Lawton would not forget himself so far."

"The Southern temper is quick and fiery," continued Miss Peyton, "and your

brother, feeble and weak as he is, has looked the whole afternoon flushed and angry."

"Good heaven!" cried Isabella, with difficulty supporting herself on the couch of Sarah; "he is gentle as a lamb by nature, though the lion is not his equal when aroused."

"We must interfere; our presence will quell the tumult and possibly save the life of a fellow-creature."

Miss Peyton, excited to attempt what she conceived a duty worthy of her sex and nature, advanced with the dignity of injured female feeling to the door, followed by Isabella. The apartment to which Sarah had been conveyed was in one of the wings of the building, and it communicated with the principal hall of the cottage by a long and dark passage. This was now light, and across its termination several figures were seen rushing, with an impetuosity that prevented an examination of their employment.

"Let us advance," said Miss Peyton, with a firmness her face belied; "they must respect our sex."

"They shall," cried Isabella, taking the lead in the enterprise. Frances was left alone with her sister. A few minutes were passed in silence; when a loud crash, in the upper apartments, was succeeded by a bright light that glared through the open door, and made objects as distinct to the eye as if they were placed under a noonday sun. Sarah raised herself on her bed, and staring wildly around, pressed both her hands on her forehead, endeavoring to recollect herself:

"This, then, is heaven—and you are one of its bright spirits. Oh! how glorious is its radiance! I had thought the happiness I have lately experienced was too much for earth. But we shall meet again—yes—yes—we shall meet again."

"Sarah! Sarah!" cried Frances, in terror; "my sister—my only sister—Oh! do not smile so horribly; know me or you will break my heart."

"Hush," said Sarah, raising her hand for silence; "you may disturb his rest—surely, he will follow me to the grave. Think you there can be two wives in the

grave? No—no—no—one—one—one—only one.”

Frances dropped her head into the lap of her sister, and wept in agony.

“Do you shed tears, sweet angel?” continued Sarah, soothingly; “then heaven is not exempt from grief. But where is Henry! He was executed, and he must be here too; perhaps they will come together. Oh, how joyful will be the meeting!”

Frances sprang on her feet and paced the apartment. The eye of Sarah followed her in childish admiration of her beauty.

“You look like my sister; but all good and lovely spirits are alike. Tell me, were you ever married? Did you ever let a stranger steal your affections from father, and brother, and sister? If not, poor wretch, I pity you, although you may be in heaven.”

“Sarah—peace, peace—I implore you to be silent,” shrieked Frances, rushing to her bed,” or you will kill me at your feet.”

Another dreadful crash shook the building to its center. It was the falling of the roof, and the flames threw their light abroad, so as to make objects visible around the cottage, through the windows of the room. Frances flew to one of them, and saw the confused group that was collected on the lawn. Among them were her aunt and Isabella, pointing with distraction to the fiery edifice, and apparently urging the dragoons to enter it. For the first time she comprehended their danger; and uttering a wild shriek, she flew through the passage, without consideration or object.

A dense and suffocating column of smoke opposed her progress. She paused to breathe, when a man caught her in his arms, and bore her, in a state of insensibility, through the falling embers and darkness, to the open air. The instant that Frances recovered her recollection, she perceived that she owed her life to Lawton, and throwing herself on her knees, she cried:

“Sarah! Sarah! Sarah! Save my sister, and may the blessing of God await you!”

Her strength failed, and she sank on the grass, in insensibility. The trooper pointed to her figure, motioned to Katy for assistance, and advanced once more to the building. The fire had already communicated to the woodwork of the piazzas and windows, and the whole exterior of the cottage was covered with smoke. The only entrance was through these dangers, and even the hardy and impetuous Lawton paused to consider. It was for a moment only, when he dashed into the heat and darkness, where, missing the entrance, he wandered for a minute, and precipitated himself back, again, upon the lawn. Drawing a single breath of pure air, he renewed the effort, and was again unsuccessful. On the third trial, he met a man staggering under the load of a human body. It was neither the place, nor was there time, to question, or to make distinctions; seizing both in his arms, with gigantic strength, he bore them through the smoke. He soon perceived, to his astonishment, that it was the surgeon, and the body of one of the Skinners, that he had saved.

“Archibald!” he exclaimed, “why, in the name of justice, did you bring this miscreant to light again? His deeds are rank to heaven!”

The surgeon, who had been in imminent peril, was too much bewildered to reply instantly, but, wiping the moisture from his forehead, and clearing his lungs from the vapor he had inhaled, he said, piteously:

“Ah! it is all over! Had I been in time to have stopped the effusion from the jugular, he might have been saved; but the heat was conducive to hemorrhage; life is extinct indeed. Well, are there any more wounded?”

His question was put to the air, for Frances had been removed to the opposite side of the building, where her friends were collected, and Lawton once more had disappeared in the smoke.

By this time the flames had dispersed much of the suffocating vapor, so that the trooper was able to find the door, and in its very entrance he was met by a man supporting the insensible Sarah. There

was but barely time to reach the lawn again, before the fire broke through the windows, and wrapped the whole building in a sheet of flame.

"God be praised!" ejaculated the pre-server of Sarah; "it would have been a dreadful death to die."

The trooper turned from gazing at the edifice to the speaker, and to his astonishment, instead of one of his own men, he beheld the peddler.

"Ha! the spy," he exclaimed; "by heavens, you cross me like a specter."

"Captain Lawton," said Birch, leaning in momentary exhaustion against the fence, to which they had retired from the heat, "I am again in your power, for I can neither flee, nor resist."

"The cause of America is dear to me as life," said the trooper; "but she cannot require her children to forget gratitude and honor. Fly, unhappy man, while yet you are unseen, or it will exceed my power to save you."

"May God prosper you, and make you victorious over your enemies," said Birch, grasping the hand of the dragoon with an iron strength that his meager figure did not indicate.

"Hold!" said Lawton; "but a word—are you what you seem?—can you—are you—"

"A royal spy," interrupted Birch, averting his face, and endeavoring to release his hand.

"Then go, miserable wretch," said the trooper, relinquishing his grasp; "either avarice or delusion has led a noble heart astray!"

The bright light from the flames reached a great distance around the ruins, but the words were hardly past the lips of Lawton, before the gaunt form of the peddler had glided over the visible space, and plunged into the darkness beyond.

The eye of Lawton rested for a moment on the spot where he had last seen this inexplicable man, and then turning to the yet insensible Sarah, he lifted her in his arms, and bore her, like a sleeping infant, to the care of her friends.

CHAPTER XXIII.

And now her charms are fading fast,
Her spirits now no more are gay;
Alas! that beauty cannot last!
That flowers so sweet so soon decay!
How sad appears
The vale of years,
How changed from youth's too flattering scene!
Where are her fond admirers gone?
Alas! and shall there then be none
On whom her soul may lean?

—CYNTHIA'S GRAVE.

THE walls of the cottage were all that was left of the building; and these, blackened by smoke, and stripped of their piazzas and ornaments, were but dreary memorials of the content and security that had so lately reigned within. The roof, together with the rest of the woodwork, had tumbled into the cellars, and a pale and flitting light, ascending from their embers, shone faintly through the windows. The early flight of the Skinners left the dragoons at liberty to exert themselves in saving much of the furniture, which lay scattered in heaps on the lawn, giving the finishing touch of desolation to the scene. Whenever a stronger ray of light than common shot upward, the composed figures of Sergeant Hollister and his associates, sitting on their horses in rigid discipline, were to be seen in the background of the picture, together with the beast of Mrs. Flanagan, which, having slipped its bridle, was quietly grazing by the highway. Betty herself had advanced to the spot where the sergeant was posted, and with an incredible degree of composure, witnessed the whole of the events as they occurred. More than once she suggested to her companion that, as the fighting seemed to be over, the proper time for plunder had arrived; but the veteran acquainted her with his orders, and remained both inflexible and immovable; until the washerwoman, observing Lawton come round the wing of the building with Sarah, ventured among the warriors. The captain, after placing Sarah on a sofa that had been hurled from the building by two of his men, retired, that the ladies might succeed him in his care. Miss Peyton and her niece flew, with a rapture that was blessed with a momen-

tary forgetfulness of all but her preservation, to receive Sarah from the trooper; but the vacant eye and flushed cheek restored them instantly to their recollection.

"Sarah, my child, my beloved niece," said the former, folding the unconscious bride in her arms, "you are saved, and may the blessing of God await him who has been the instrument."

"See," said Sarah, gently pushing her aunt aside, and pointing to the glimmer in gruin, "the windows are illuminated in honor of my arrival. They always receive a bride thus—he told me they would do no less; listen, and you will hear the bells."

"Here is no bride, no rejoicing, nothing but woe!" cried Frances, in a manner but little less frantic than that of her sister. "Oh! may Heaven restore you to us—to yourself!"

"Peace, foolish young woman," said Sarah, with a smile of affected pity; "all cannot be happy at the same moment; perhaps you have no brother, or husband, to console you; you look beautiful, and you will yet find one; but," she continued, dropping her voice to a whisper, "see that he has no other wife—'tis dreadful to think what might happen should he be twice married."

"The shock has destroyed her mind," cried Miss Peyton; "my child, my beautiful Sarah is a maniac!"

"No, no, no," cried Frances; "it is fever; she is light-headed—she must recover—she shall recover."

The aunt caught joyfully at the hope conveyed in this suggestion, and dispatched Katy to request the immediate aid and advice of Dr. Sitgreaves. The surgeon was found inquiring among the men for professional employment, and inquisitively examining every bruise and scratch that he could induce the sturdy warriors to acknowledge they had received. A summons of the sort conveyed by Katy was instantly obeyed, and not a minute elapsed before he was by the side of Miss Peyton.

"This is a melancholy termination to so joyful a commencement of the night,

madam," he observed, in a soothing manner; "but war must bring its attendant miseries; though doubtless it often supports the cause of liberty, and improves the knowledge of surgical science."

Miss Peyton could make no reply, but pointed to her niece, in agony.

"'Tis fever," answered Frances; "see how glassy is her eye, and look at her cheek, how flushed."

The surgeon stood for a moment, deeply studying the outward symptoms of his patient, and then he silently took her hand in his own. It was seldom that the hard and abstracted features of Sitgreaves discovered any violent emotion; all his passions seemed schooled, and his countenance did not often betray what, indeed, his heart frequently felt. In the present instance, however, the eager gaze of the aunt and sister quickly detected his emotions. After laying his fingers for a minute on the beautiful arm, which, bared to the elbow, and glittering with jewels, Sarah suffered him to retain, he dropped it, and dashing a hand over his eyes, turned sorrowfully away.

"Here is no fever to excite—'tis a case, my dear madam, for time and care only; these, with the blessing of God, may effect a cure."

"And where is the wretch who has caused this ruin?" exclaimed Singleton, rejecting the support of his man, and making an effort to rise from the chair into which he had been driven by debility. "It is in vain that we overcome our enemies, if, conquered, they can inflict such wounds as this."

"Dost think, foolish boy," said Lawton, with a bitter smile, "that hearts can feel in a colony? What is America but a satellite of England—to move as she moves, follow where she wists, and shine, that the mother-country may become more splendid by her radiance? Surely you forget that it is honor enough for a colonist to receive ruin from the hand of a child of Britain."

"I forget not that I wear a sword," said Singleton, falling back exhausted; "but was there no willing arm ready to

avenge that lovely sufferer—to appease the wrongs of that hoary father?”

“Neither arms nor hearts are wanting, sir, in such a cause,” said Lawton, bustling up to his side; “but chance oftentimes helps the wicked. By heavens, I’d give Roanoke himself for a clear field with the miscreant!”

“Nay! captain dear, no be parting with the horse, anyway,” said Betty; “it is no trifle that can be had by jist asking the right person, if yee’re in need of silver, and the baste is sure of foot, and jumps like a squirrel.”

“Woman, fifty horses, ay, the best that were ever reared on the banks of the Potomac, would be but a paltry price for one blow at a villain.”

“Come,” said the surgeon, “the night air can do no service to George, or these ladies, and it is incumbent on us to remove them where they can find surgical attendance and refreshment. Here is nothing but smoking ruins and the miasma of the swamps.”

To this rational proposition no objection could be raised, and the necessary orders were issued by Lawton to remove the whole party to the Four Corners.

America furnished but few and very indifferent carriage-makers at the period of which we write, and every vehicle that in the least aspired to that dignity was the manufacture of a London mechanic. When Mr. Wharton left the city he was one of the very few who maintained the state of a carriage; and, at the time Miss Peyton and his daughters joined him in his retirement, they had been conveyed to the cottage in the heavy chariot that had once so imposingly rolled through the windings of Queen street, or emerged, with somber dignity, into the more spacious drive of Broadway. This vehicle stood, undisturbed, where it had been placed on its arrival, and the age of the horses alone had protected the favorites of Cæsar from sequestration by the contending forces in their neighborhood. With a heavy heart, the black, assisted by a few of the dragoons, proceeded to prepare it for the reception of the ladies. It was a cumbrous vehicle, whose faded linings

and tarnished hammercloth, together with its panels of changing colors, denoted the want of that art which had once given it luster and beauty. The “lion couchant” of the Wharton arms was reposing on the reviving splendor of a blazonry that told the armorial bearings of a prince of the Church; and the miter, that already began to shine through its American mask, was a symbol of the rank of its original owner. The chaise which conveyed Miss Singleton was also safe, and the stable and out-buildings had entirely escaped the flames; it certainly had been no part of the plan of the marauders to leave so well-appointed a stud behind them, but the suddenness of the attack by Lawton not only disconcerted their arrangements on this point, but on many others also. A guard was left on the ground, under the command of Hollister, who, having discovered that his enemy was of mortal mold, took his position with admirable coolness, and no little skill, to guard against surprise. He drew off his small party to such a distance from the ruins that it was effectually concealed in the darkness, while at the same time the light continued sufficiently powerful to discover anyone who might approach the lawn with an intent to plunder.

Satisfied with this judicious arrangement, Captain Lawton made his dispositions for the march. Miss Peyton, her two nieces, and Isabella, were placed in the chariot, while the cart of Mrs. Flanagan, amply supplied with blankets and a bed, was honored with the person of Captain Singleton. Dr. Sitgreaves took charge of the chaise and Mr. Wharton. What became of the rest of the family during that eventful night is unknown, for Cæsar alone, of the domestics, was to be found, if we except the housekeeper. Having disposed of the whole party in this manner, Lawton gave the word to march. He remained himself, for a few minutes, alone on the lawn, secreting various pieces of plate and other valuables, that he was fearful might tempt the cupidity of his own men; when, perceiving nothing more that he conceived likely to overcome their honesty, he threw himself into the saddle with

the soldierly intention of bringing up the rear.

"Stop, stop," cried a female voice; "will you leave me alone to be murdered? the spoon is melted, I believe, and I'll have compensation, if there's law or justice in this unhappy land."

Lawton turned an eye in the direction of the sound, and perceived a female emerging from the ruins, loaded with a bundle that vied in size with the renowned pack of the peddler.

"Who have we here," said the trooper, "rising like a phoenix from the flames? Oh! by the soul of Hippocrates, but it is the identical she-doctor, of famous needle reputation. Well, my good woman, what means this outcry?"

"Outcry!" echoed Katy, panting for breath; "is it not disparagement enough to lose a silver spoon, but I must be left alone in this lonesome place, to be robbed, and perhaps murdered? Harvey would not serve me so; when I lived with Harvey, I was always treated with respect, at least, if he was a little close with his secrets, and wasteful of his money."

"Then, madam, you once formed part of the household of Mr. Harvey Birch?"

"You may say I was the whole of his household," returned the other; "there was nobody but I and he, and the old gentleman; you didn't know the old gentleman, perhaps?"

"That happiness was denied me; how long did you live in the family of Mr. Birch?"

"I disremember the precise time, but it must have been hard upon nine years; and what better am I for it all?"

"Sure enough; I can see but little benefit that you have derived from the association, truly. But is there not something unusual in the movements and character of this Mr. Birch?"

"Unusual is an easy word for such unaccountables!" replied Katy, lowering her voice, and looking around her; "he was a wonderful disregardful man, and minded a guinea no more than I do a kernel of corn. But help me to some way of joining Miss Jinitt, and I will tell you

prodigies of what Harvey has done, first and last."

"You will?" exclaimed the trooper, musing; "here, give me leave to feel your arm above the elbow. There—you are not deficient in bone, let the blood be as it may." So saying, he gave the spinster a sudden whirl that effectually confused all her faculties, until she found herself safely, if not comfortably, seated on the crupper of Lawton's steed.

"Now, madam, you have the consolation of knowing that you are as well mounted as Washington. The nag is sure of foot, and will leap like a panther."

"Let me get down," cried Katy, struggling to release herself from his iron grasp, and yet afraid of falling; "this is no way to put a woman on a horse; besides, I can't ride without a pillion."

"Softly, good madam," said Lawton; "for although Roanoke never falls before, he sometimes rises behind. He is far from being accustomed to a pair of heels beating upon his flanks like a drum-major on a field-day; a single touch of the spur will serve him for a fortnight, and it is by no means wise to be kicking in this manner, for he is a horse that but little likes to be undone."

"Let me down, I say," screamed Katy; "I shall fall and be killed. Besides, I have nothing to hold on with; my arms are full of valuables."

"True," returned the trooper, observing that he had brought bundle and all from the ground; "I perceive that you belong to the baggage-guard; but my sword-belt will encircle your little waist, as well as my own."

Katy was too much pleased with this compliment to make any resistance, while he buckled her close to his own herculean frame, and, driving a spur into his charger, they flew from the lawn with a rapidity that denied further denial. After proceeding for some time at a rate that a good deal discomposed the spinster, they overtook the cart of the washerwoman driving slowly over the stones, with a proper consideration for the wounds of Captain Singleton. The occurrences of that eventful night had produced an ex-

citement in the young soldier that was followed by the ordinary lassitude of reaction, and he lay carefully enveloped in blankets, and supported by his man, but little able to converse, though deeply brooding over the past. The dialogue between Lawton and his companion ceased with the commencement of their motions, but a foot pace being more favorable to speech, the trooper began anew :

"Then you have been an inmate in the same house with Harvey Birch?"

"For more than nine years," said Katy, drawing her breath, and rejoicing greatly that their speed was abated.

The deep tones of the trooper's voice were no sooner conveyed to the ears of the washerwoman, than, turning her head, where she sat directing the movements of the mare, she put into the discourse at the first pause :

"Belike, then, good woman, yee'r knowing whether or no he's akin to Beelzebub," said Betty; "it's Sargeant Hollister who's saying the same, and no fool is the sargeant, anyway."

"It's a scandalous disparagement," cried Katy, vehemently; "no kinder soul than Harvey carries a pack; and for a gownd or a tidy apron, he will never take a king's farthing from a friend. Beelzebub, indeed! For what would he read the Bible, if he had dealings with the evil spirit?"

"He's an honest divil, anyway; as I was saying before, the guinea was pure. But then the sargeant thinks him amiss, and it's no want of larning that Mister Hollister has."

"He's a fool!" said Katy, tartly. "Harvey might be a man of substance, were he not so disregardful. How often have I told him, that if he did nothing but peddle, and would put his gains to use, and get married, so that things at home could be kept within doors, and leave off his dealings with the rig'lars, and all incumberments, that he would soon become an excellent liver. Sargeant Hollister would be glad to hold a candle to him, indeed!"

"Pooh!" said Betty, in her philosophical way; "yee're no thinking that Mis-

ter Hollister is an officer, and stands next the cornet in the troop. But this piddler gave warning of the brush the night, and it's no sure that Captain Jack would have got the day, but for the re-enforcement."

"How say you, Betty," cried the trooper, bending forward on his saddle; "had you notice of our danger from Birch?"

"The very same, darling; and it's hurry I was till the boys was in motion; not but I know yee'r enough for the Cow-boys any time. But wid the divil on your side, I was sure of the day. I'm only wondering there's so little plunder in a business of Beelzebub's contriving."

"I'm obliged to you for the rescue, and equally indebted to the motive."

"Is it the plunder? But little did I think of it till I saw the movables on the ground, some burnt, and some broke, and other some as good as new. It would be convenient to have one feather-bed in the corps, anyway."

"By heavens, 'twas timely succor! Had not Roanoke been swifter than their bullets, I must have fallen. The animal is worth his weight in gold."

"It's continental, you mane, darling. Gould weighs heavy, and is no plenty in the States. If the nagur hadn't been staying and frightening the sargeant with his copper-colored looks, and a matter of blarney 'bout ghosts, we should have been in time to have killed all the dogs, and taken the rest prisoners."

"It is very well as it is, Betty," said Lawton; "a day will yet come, I trust, when those miscreants shall be rewarded, if not in judgments upon their persons, at least in the opinions of their fellow-citizens. The time must arrive when America will learn to distinguish between a patriot and a robber."

"Speak low," said Katy; "there's some one who think much of themselves, that have doings with the Skinners."

"It's more they are thinking of themselves, then, than other people thinks of them," cried Betty; "a tief's a tief anyway; whether he stales for King George or for Congress."

"I know'd that evil would soon hap-

pen," said Katy; "the sun set to-night behind a black cloud, and the house-dog whined, although I gave him his supper with my own hands; besides, it's not a week sin' I dreamed the dream about the thousand lighted candles, and the cakes being burnt in the oven."

"Well," said Betty, "it's but little I drame, anyway. Jest keep an asy conscience and a plenty of the stuff in yez, and ye'll sleep like an infant. The last drame I had was when the boys put the thistle-tops in the blankets, and then I was thinking that Captain Jack's man was currying me down, for the matter of Roanoke; but it's no trifle I mind either in skin or stomach."

"I'm sure," said Katy, with a stiff erection that drew Lawton back in his saddle, "no man shall ever dare to lay hands on bed of mine; it's undecent and despicable conduct."

"Pooh! pooh!" cried Betty; "if you tag after a troop of horse, a small bit of a joke must be borne; what would become of the States and liberty, if the boys had never a clane shirt, or a drop to comfort them. Ask Captain Jack, there, if they'd fight, Mrs. Beelzeboob, and they no clane linen to keep the victory in."

"I'm a single woman, and my name is Haynes," said Katy, "and I'd thank you to use no disparaging terms when speaking to me."

"You must tolerate a little license in the tongue of Mrs. Flanagan, madam," said the trooper; "the drop she speaks of is often of an extraordinary size, and then she has acquired the freedom of a soldier's manner."

"Pooh! captain, darling," cried Betty; "why do you bother the woman! talk like yeerself, dear, and it's no fool of a tongue ye've got in yeer own head. But it's here away that the sargeant made a halt, thinking there might be more devils than one stirring, the night. The clouds are as black as Arnold's heart, and deuce the star is there twinkling among them. Well, the mare is used to a march after nightfall, and is smelling out the road like a pointer slut."

"It wants but little to the rising moon,"

observed the trooper. He called a dragoon, who was riding in advance, issued a few orders and cautions relative to the comfort and safety of Singleton, and speaking a consoling word to his friend himself, gave Roanoke the spur, and dashed by the cart at a rate that again put to flight all the philosophy of Catharine Haynes.

"Good luck to yee, for a free rider and a bold!" shouted the washerwoman, as he passed; "if yee're meeting Mister Beelzeboob, jist baak the baste up to him, and show him his consort that yee've got an the crupper. I'm thinking it's no long he'd tarry to chat. Well, well, it's his life that we saved, he was saying so himself—though the plunder is nothing to signify."

The cries of Betty Flanagan were too familiar to the ears of Captain Lawton to elicit a reply. Notwithstanding the unusual burden that Roanoke sustained, he got over the ground with great rapidity, and the distance between the cart of Mrs. Flanagan and the chariot of Miss Peyton was passed in a manner that, however it answered the intentions of the trooper, in no degree contributed to the comfort of his companion. The meeting occurred but a short distance from the quarters of Lawton, and at the same instant the moon broke from behind a mass of clouds, and threw its light upon objects.

Compared with the simple elegance and substantial comfort of the Locusts, the "Hotel Flanagan" presented but a dreary spectacle. In the place of carpeted floors and curtained windows, were the yawning cracks of a rudely-constructed dwelling, and boards and paper were ingeniously applied to supply the place of the green glass in more than half the lights. The care of Lawton had anticipated every improvement that their situation would allow, and blazing fires were made before the party arrived. The dragoons who had been charged with this duty had conveyed a few necessary articles of furniture, and her companions, on alighting, found something like habitable apartments prepared for their reception. The mind of Sarah had continued to wander during the ride, and, with the ingenuity of the insane, she

accommodated every circumstance to the feelings that were uppermost in her own bosom.

"It is impossible to minister to a mind that has sustained such a blow," said Lawton to Isabella Singleton; "time and God's mercy can alone cure it; but something more may be done toward the bodily comfort of all. You are a soldier's daughter, and used to scenes like this; help me to exclude some of the cold air from these windows."

Miss Singleton acceded to his request, and while Lawton was endeavoring, from without, to remedy the defect of broken panes, Isabella was arranging a substitute for a curtain within.

"I hear the cart," said the trooper, in reply to one of her interrogatories. "Betty is tender-hearted in the main; believe me, poor George will not only be safe, but comfortable."

"God bless her for her care, and bless you all," said Isabella, fervently. "Dr. Sitgreaves has gone down the road to meet him, I know—what is that glittering in the moon?"

Directly opposite the window where they stood were the out-buildings of the farm, and the quick eye of Lawton caught at a glance the object to which she alluded.

"'Tis the glare of firearms," said the trooper, springing from the window toward his charger, which yet remained caparisoned at the door. His movement was quick as thought, but a flash of fire was followed by the whistling of a bullet before he had proceeded a step. A loud shriek burst from the dwelling, and the captain sprang into his saddle; the whole was the business of but a moment.

"Mount—mount and follow!" shouted the trooper; and before his astonished men could understand the cause of alarm, Roanoke had carried him in safety over the fence which lay between him and his foe. The chase was for life or death, but the distance to the rocks was again too short, and the disappointed trooper saw his intended victim vanish in their clefts, where he could not follow.

"By the life of Washington!" mut-

tered Lawton, as he sheathed his saber, "I would have made two halves of him had he not been so nimble on the foot—but a time will come!" So saying he returned to his quarters, with the indifference of a man who knew his life was at any moment to be offered a sacrifice to his country. An extraordinary tumult in the house induced him to quicken his speed; on arriving at the door, the panic-stricken Katy informed him that the bullet, aimed at his own life, had taken effect in the bosom of Miss Singleton.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hush'd were his Gertrude's lips! but still their bland

And beautiful expression seem'd to melt
With love that could not die! and still his hand
She presses to the heart no more that felt.

—GERTRUDE OF WYOMING.

THE brief arrangements of the dragoons had prepared two apartments for the reception of the ladies, the one being intended as a sleeping-room, and situated within the other. Into the latter Isabella was immediately conveyed, at her own request, and placed on a rude bed by the side of the unconscious Sarah. When Miss Peyton and Frances flew to her assistance, they found her with a smile on her pallid lip and a composure in her countenance that induced them to think her uninjured.

"God be praised!" exclaimed the trembling aunt; "the report of firearms, and your fall had led me into an error. Surely, surely, there was enough of horror before; but this has been spared us."

Isabella pressed her hand upon her bosom, still smiling, but with a ghastliness that curdled the blood of Frances.

"Is George far distant?" she asked; "let him know—hasten him, that I may see my brother once again."

"It is as I apprehended!" shrieked Miss Peyton; "but you smile—surely you are not hurt!"

"Quite well—quite happy," murmured Isabella; "here is a remedy for every pain."

Sarah arose from the reclining posture

she had taken, and gazed wildly at her companion. She stretched forth her own hand, and raised that of Isabella from her bosom. It was dyed in blood.

"See," said Sarah, "but will it not wash away love? Marry, young woman, and then no one can expel him from your heart, unless"—she added, whispering, and bending over the other—"you find another there before you; then die, and go to heaven—there are no wives in heaven."

The lovely maniac hid her face under the clothes, and continued silent during the remainder of the night. At this moment Lawton entered. Inured as he was to danger in all its forms, and accustomed to the horrors of a partisan war, the trooper could not behold the ruin before him unmoved. He bent over the fragile form of Isabella, and his gloomy eye betrayed the workings of his soul.

"Isabella," he at length uttered, "I know you to possess a courage beyond the strength of woman."

"Speak," she said, earnestly; "if you have anything to say, speak fearlessly."

The trooper averted his face as he replied: "None ever receive a ball there, and survive."

"I have no dread of death, Lawton," returned Isabella—"I thank you for not doubting me; I felt it from the first."

"These are not scenes for a form like yours," added the trooper; "'tis enough that Britain calls our youth to the field; but when such loveliness becomes the victim of war, I sicken of my trade."

"Hear me, Captain Lawton," said Isabella, raising herself with difficulty, but rejecting aid; "from early womanhood to the present hour have I been an inmate of camps and garrisons. I have lived to cheer the leisure of an aged father, and think you I would change those days of danger and privation for any ease? No! I have the consolation of knowing in my dying moments that what woman could do in such a cause I have done."

"Who could prove a recreant and witness such a spirit! Hundreds of warriors have I witnessed in their blood, but never a firmer soul among them all."

"'Tis the soul only," said Isabella; "my sex and strength have denied me the dearest of privileges. But to you, Captain Lawton, nature has been more bountiful; you have an arm and a heart to devote to the cause; and I know they are an arm and a heart that will prove true to the last. And George—and—" she paused, her lip quivered, and her eye sank to the floor.

"And Dunwoodie!" added the trooper; "would you speak of Dunwoodie?"

"Name him not," said Isabella, sinking back and concealing her face in her garments; "leave me, Lawton—prepare poor George for this unexpected blow."

The trooper continued for a little while gazing, in melancholy interest, at the convulsive shudderings of her frame, which the scanty covering could not conceal, and withdrew to meet his comrade. The interview between Singleton and his sister was painful, and, for a moment, Isabella yielded to a burst of tenderness; but, as if aware that her hours were numbered, she was the first to rouse herself to exertion. At her earnest request, the room was left to herself, the captain, and Frances. The repeated applications of the surgeon, to be permitted to use professional aid, were steadily rejected, and, at length, he was obliged unwillingly to retire.

"Raise me," said the dying young woman, "and let me look on a face that I love once more." Frances silently complied, and Isabella turned her eyes in sisterly affection upon George—"It matters but little, my brother;—a few hours must close the scene."

"Live, Isabella, my sister, my only sister!" cried the youth, with a burst of sorrow that he could not control; "my father! my poor father——"

"There is the sting of death; but he is a soldier and a Christian. Miss Wharton, I would speak of what interests you, while yet I have strength for the task."

"Nay," said Frances, tenderly, "compose yourself; let no desire to oblige me endanger a life that is precious to—so many." The words were nearly stifled by her emotions, for the other had

touched a chord that thrilled to her heart.

"Poor, sensitive girl!" said Isabella, regarding her with tender interest; "but the world is still before you, and why should I disturb the little happiness it may afford! Dream on, lovely innocent, and may God keep the evil day of knowledge far distant!"

"Oh, there is even now little left for me to enjoy," said Frances, burying her face in the clothes; "I am heart-stricken in all that I most loved."

"No!" interrupted Isabella; "you have one inducement to wish for life, that pleads strongly in a woman's breast. It is a delusion that nothing but death can destroy—" Exhaustion compelled her to pause, and her auditors continued in breathless suspense, until, recovering her strength, she laid her hand on that of Frances, and continued more mildly: "Miss Wharton, if there breathes a spirit congenial to Dunwoodie's, and worthy of his love, it is your own."

A flush of fire passed over the face of the listener, and she raised her eyes, flashing with an ungovernable look of delight, to the countenance of Isabella; but the ruin she beheld recalled better feelings, and again her head dropped upon the covering of the bed. Isabella watched her emotion with a look that partook both of pity and admiration.

"Such have been the feelings that I have escaped," she continued; "yes, Miss Wharton, Dunwoodie is wholly yours."

"Be just to yourself, my sister," exclaimed the youth; "let no romantic generosity cause you to forget your own character."

She heard him, and fixed a gaze of tender interest on his face, but slowly shook her head as she replied:

"It is not romance, but truth, that bids me speak. Oh! how much have I lived within an hour! Miss Wharton, I was born under a burning sun, and my feelings seem to have imbibed its warmth; I have existed for passion only."

"Say not so—say not so, I implore you," cried the agitated brother; "think how devoted has been your love to our

aged father; how disinterested, how tender, your affection to me!"

"Yes," said Isabella, a smile of mild pleasure beaming on her countenance; "that, at least, is a reflection which may be taken to the grave."

Neither Frances nor her brother interrupted her meditations, which continued for several minutes; when, suddenly recollecting herself, she continued:

"I remain selfish even to the last; with me, Miss Wharton, America and her liberties was my earliest passion, and—" again she paused, and Frances thought it was the struggle of death that followed; but reviving, she proceeded: "Why should I hesitate on the brink of the grave? Dunwoodie was my next and my last. But," burying her face in her hands, "it was a love that was unsought."

"Isabella!" exclaimed her brother, springing from the bed, and pacing the floor in disorder.

"See how dependent we become under the dominion of worldly pride; it is painful to George to learn that one he loves had not feelings superior to her nature and education."

"Say no more," whispered Frances; "you distress us both—say no more, I entreat you."

"In justice to Dunwoodie I must speak; and for the same reason, my brother, you must listen. By no act or word has Dunwoodie ever induced me to believe he wished me more than a friend; nay, latterly, I have had the burning shame of thinking that he avoided my presence."

"Would he dare?" said Singleton, fiercely.

"Peace, my brother, and listen," continued Isabella, rousing herself with an effort that was final; "here is the innocent, the justifiable cause. We are both motherless; but that aunt—that mild, plain-hearted, observing aunt, has given you the victory. Oh! how much she loses who loses a female guardian to her youth. I have exhibited those feelings which you have been taught to repress. After this, can I wish to live?"

"Isabella! my poor Isabella! you wander in your mind."

"But one word more—for I feel that blood, which ever flowed too swiftly, rushing where nature never intended it to go. Woman must be sought to be prized; her life is one of concealed emotions; blessed are they whose early impressions make the task free from hypocrisy, for such only can be happy with men like—like Dunwoodie." Her voice failed, and she sank back on her pillow in silence. The cry of Singleton brought the rest of the party to her bedside, but death was already upon her countenance; her remaining strength just sufficed to reach the hand of George, and, pressing it to her bosom for a moment, she relinquished her grasp, and, with a slight convulsion, expired.

Frances Wharton had thought that fate had done its worst in endangering the life of her brother and destroying the reason of her sister; but the relief conveyed by the dying declaration of Isabella taught her that another sorrow had aided in loading her heart with grief. She saw the whole truth at a glance; nor was the manly delicacy of Dunwoodie lost upon her—everything tended to raise him in her estimation; and, for mourning that duty and pride had induced her to strive to think less of him, she was compelled to substitute regret that her own act had driven him from her in sorrow, if not in desperation. It is not in the nature of youth, however, to despair; and Frances knew a secret joy in the midst of her distress that gave a new spring to her existence.

The sun broke forth, on the morning that succeeded this night of desolation, in unclouded luster, and seemed to mock the petty sorrows of those who received his rays. Lawton had early ordered his steed, and was ready to mount as the first burst of light broke over the hills. His orders were already given, and the trooper threw his leg across the saddle in silence; and, casting a glance of fierce chagrin at the narrow space that had favored the flight of the Skinner, he gave Roanoke the rein, and moved slowly toward the valley.

The stillness of death pervaded the road, nor was there a single vestige of the scenes of the night to tarnish the loveliness of a

glorious morn. Struck with the contrast between man and nature, the fearless trooper rode by each pass of danger, regardless of what might happen; nor did he rouse himself from his musing until the noble charger, snuffing the morning air, greeted the steeds of the guard under Sergeant Hollister.

Here, indeed, was to be seen sad evidence of the midnight fray; but the trooper glanced his eye over it with the coolness of one accustomed to such sights. Without wasting the moments in useless regrets, he proceeded, at once, to business.

"Have you seen anything?" he demanded of the orderly.

"Nothing, sir, that we dared to charge upon," returned Hollister; "but we mounted once, at the report of distant firearms."

"'Tis well," said Lawton, gloomily. "Ah! Hollister, I would give the animal I ride to have had your single arm between the wretch who drew that trigger and these useless rocks, which overhang every bit of ground as if they grudged pasture to a single hoof."

"Under the light of day, and charging man to man, I am as good as another; but I can't say that I'm over-fond of fighting with those that neither steel nor lead can bring down."

"What silly crotchet is uppermost, now, in that mystified brain of thine, Deacon Hollister?"

"I like not the dark object that has been maneuvering in the skirt of the wood since the first dawn of day; and twice, during the night, it was seen marching across the firelight, no doubt with evil intent."

"Is it yon ball of black, at the foot of the rock-maple, that you mean? In truth it moves."

"But without mortal motion," said the sergeant, regarding it with awful reverence; "it glides along, but no feet have been seen by any who watch it here."

"Had it wings," cried Lawton, "it is mine; stand fast until I join." The words were hardly uttered before Roanoke was flying across the plain, and apparently verifying the boast of his master.

"Those cursed rocks!" ejaculated the

trooper, as he saw the object of his pursuit approaching the hillside; but either from want of practice or from terror, it passed the obvious shelter they offered, and fled into the open plain.

"I have you, man or devil!" shouted Lawton, whirling his saber from its scabbard. "Halt, and take quarter!"

His proposition was apparently acceded to; for at the sound of his powerful voice the figure sank upon the ground, exhibiting a shapeless ball of black, without life or motion.

"What have we here?" cried Lawton, drawing up by its side; "a gala suit of the good maiden, Jeannette Peyton, wandering around its birthplace, or searching in vain for its discomfited mistress?" He leaned forward in his stirrups, and placing the point of the sword under the silken garment, by throwing aside the covering, discovered part of the form of the reverend gentleman who had fled from the Locusts, the evening before, in his robes of office.

"In truth, Hollister had some ground for his alarm; an army chaplain is, at any time, a terror to a troop of horse."

The clergyman had collected enough of his disturbed faculties to discover that it was a face he knew, and somewhat disconcerted at the terror he had manifested, and the indecent attitude in which he had been found, he endeavored to rise and offer some explanation. Lawton received his apologies good-humoredly, if not with much faith in their truth; and, after a short communication upon the state of the valley, the trooper courteously alighted, and they proceeded toward the guard.

"I am so little acquainted, sir, with the rebel uniform, that I really was unable to distinguish whether those men, whom you say are your own, did or did not belong to the gang of marauders."

"Apology, sir, is unnecessary," replied the trooper, curling his lip; "it is not your task, as a minister of God, to take note of the facings of a coat. The standard under which you serve is acknowledged by us all."

"I serve under the standard of his gracious Majesty George III.," returned the

priest, wiping the cold sweat from his brow; "but really, the idea of being scalped has a strong tendency to unman a new beginner, like myself."

"Scalped!" echoed Lawton, stopping short in his walk; then recollecting himself, he added, with composure—"If it is to Dunwoodie's squadron of Virginian light dragoons that you alluded, it may be well to inform you that they generally take a bit of the skull with the skin."

"Oh! I can have no apprehension of gentlemen of your appearance," said the divine, with a smirk; "it is the natives that I apprehend."

"Natives! I have the honor to be one, I do assure you, sir."

"Nay, I beg that I may be understood—I mean the Indians; they who do nothing but rob, and murder, and destroy."

"And scalp!"

"Yes, sir, and scalp, too," continued the clergyman, eying his companion a little suspiciously; "the copper-colored, savage Indians."

"And did you expect to meet those nose-jeweled gentry in the neutral ground?"

"Certainly; we understand in England that the interior swarms with them."

"And call you this the interior of America?" cried Lawton, again halting, and staring the other in the face with a surprise too naturally expressed to be counterfeited.

"Surely, sir, I conceive myself to be in the interior."

"Attend," said Lawton, pointing toward the east; "see you not that broad sheet of water which the eye cannot compass? thither lies the England you deem worthy to hold dominion over half the world. See you the land of your nativity?"

"'Tis impossible to behold objects at a distance of three thousand miles!" exclaimed the wondering priest, a little suspicious of his companion's sanity.

"No! what a pity it is that the powers of man are not equal to his ambition. Now turn your eyes westward; observe that vast expanse of water which rolls between the shores of America and China."

"I see nothing but land," said the

trembling priest; "there is no water to be seen."

"'Tis impossible to behold objects at a distance of three thousand miles!" repeated Lawton, pursuing his walk; "if you apprehend the savages, seek them in the ranks of your prince. Rum and gold have preserved their loyalty."

"Nothing is more probable than my being deceived," said the man of peace, casting furtive glances at the colossal stature and whiskered front of his companion; "but the rumors we have at home, and the uncertainty of meeting with such an enemy as yourself, induced me to fly at your approach."

"'Twas not judiciously determined," said the trooper, "as Roanoke has the heels of you greatly; and flying from Scylla, you were liable to encounter Charybdis. Those woods and rocks cover the very enemies you dread."

"The savages!" exclaimed the divine, instinctively placing the trooper in the rear.

"More than savages; men who, under the guise of patriotism, prowl through the community with a thirst for plunder that is unsatiable, and a love of cruelty that mocks the ingenuity of the Indian. Fellows whose mouths are filled with liberty and equality, and whose hearts are overflowing with cupidity and gall—gentlemen that are yeveled the Skinners."

"I have heard them mentioned in our army," said the frightened divine, "and had brought them to be the aborigines."

"You did the savages injustice."

They now approached the spot occupied by Hollister, who witnessed with surprise the character of the prisoner made by his captain. Lawton gave his orders, and the men immediately commenced securing and removing such articles of furniture as were thought worthy of the trouble; and the captain, with his reverend associate, who was mounted on a mettled horse, returned to the quarters of the troop.

It was the wish of Singleton that the remains of his sister should be conveyed to the post commanded by his father, and preparations were early made to this effect. The wounded British were placed

under the control of the chaplain; and toward the middle of the day Lawton saw all the arrangements so far completed, as to render it probable that in a few hours he would be left, with his small party, in undisturbed possession of the Corners.

While leaning in the doorway, gazing in moody silence at the ground which had been the scene of the last night's chase, his ear caught the sound of a horse, and the next moment a dragoon of his own troop appeared dashing up the road, as if on business of the last importance. The steed was foaming, and the rider had the appearance of having done a hard day's service. Without speaking, he placed a letter in the hand of Lawton, and led his charger to the stable. The trooper knew the hand of the major, and ran his eye over the following:

"I rejoice it is the order of Washington that the family of the Locusts are to be removed above the Highlands. They are to be admitted to the society of Captain Wharton, who waits only for their testimony to be tried. You will communicate this order, and with proper delicacy, I do not doubt. The English are moving up the river; and the moment you see the Whartons in safety, break up, and join your troop. There will be good service to be done when we meet, as Sir Henry is reported to have sent out a real soldier in command. Reports must be made to the commandment at Peekskill, for Colonel Singleton is withdrawn to headquarters, to preside over the inquiry upon poor Wharton. Fresh orders have been sent to hang the peddler if we can take him, but they are not from the commander-in-chief. Detail a small guard with the ladies, and get into the saddle as soon as possible.

"Yours sincerely,

"PEYTON DUNWOODIE."

This communication entirely changed the whole arrangement. There was no longer any motive for removing the body of Isabella, since her father was no longer with his command, and Singleton reluctantly acquiesced in an immediate interment. A retired and lovely spot was selected near the foot of the adjacent rocks, and such rude preparations were made as the time and the situation of the

country permitted. A few of the neighboring inhabitants collected, from curiosity and interest, and Miss Peyton and Frances wept in sincerity over her grave. The solemn offices of the Church were performed by the minister who had so lately stood forth to officiate in another and very different duty; and Lawton bent his head, and passed his hand across his brow, while the words that accompanied the first clod were uttered.

A new stimulus was given to the Whartons by the intelligence conveyed in the letter of Dunwoodie; and Cæsar, with his horses, was once more put in requisition. The relics of the property were intrusted to a neighbor, in whom they had confidence; and accompanied by the unconscious Sarah, and attended by four dragoons and all the American wounded, Mr. Wharton's party took their departure. They were speedily followed by the English chaplain, with his countrymen, who were conveyed to the waterside, where a vessel was in waiting to receive them. Lawton joyfully witnessed these movements; and as soon as the latter were out of sight, he ordered his own bugle to sound. Everything was instantly in motion. The mare of Mrs. Flanagan was again fastened to the cart; Dr. Sitgreaves exhibited his shapeless form once more on horseback; and the trooper appeared in the saddle, rejoicing in his emancipation. The word to march was given; and Lawton, throwing a look of sullen ferocity at the place of the Skinner's concealment, and another of melancholy regret toward the grave of Isabella, led the way, accompanied by the surgeon in a brown study; while Sergeant Hollister and Betty brought up the rear, leaving a fresh southerly wind to whistle through the open doors and broken windows of the "Hotel Flanagan," where the laugh of hilarity, the joke of the hardy partisan, and the lamentations of the sorrowing had so lately echoed

CHAPTER XXV.

No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
But winter lingering chills the lap of May;
No zephyr fondly sues the mountain's breast,
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.
—GOLDSMITH.

THE roads of Westchester are, at this hour, below the improvements of the country. Their condition at the time of the tale has already been alluded to in these pages; and the reader will, therefore, easily imagine the task assumed by Cæsar, when he undertook to guide the translated chariot of the English prelate through their windings, into one of the less frequented passes of the Highlands of the Hudson.

While Cæsar and his steeds were contending with these difficulties, the inmates of the carriage were too much engrossed with their own cares to attend to those who served them. The mind of Sarah had ceased to wander so wildly as at first; but at every advance that she made toward reason, she seemed to retire a step from animation; from being excited and flighty, she was gradually becoming moody and melancholy. There were moments, indeed, when her anxious companions thought that they could discern marks of recollection; but the expression of exquisite woe that accompanied these transient gleams of reason, forced them to the dreadful alternative of wishing that she might forever be spared the agony of thought. The day's march was performed chiefly in silence, and the party found shelter for the night in different farm-houses.

The following morning the cavalcade dispersed. The wounded diverged toward the river, with the intention of taking water at Peekskill, in order to be transported to the hospitals of the American army above. The litter of Singleton was conveyed to a part of the Highlands where his father held his quarters, and where it was intended that the youth should complete his cure; the carriage of Mr. Wharton, accompanied by a wagon conveying the housekeeper and what baggage had been saved, and could be trans-

ported, resumed its route toward the place where Henry Wharton was held in duresse, and where he only waited their arrival to be put on trial for his life.

The country which lies between the waters of the Hudson and Long Island Sound is, for the first forty miles from their junction, a succession of hills and dales. The land bordering on the latter then becomes less abrupt and gradually assumes a milder appearance, until it finally melts into the lovely plains and meadows of the Connecticut. But as you approach the Hudson the rugged aspect increases, until you at length meet with the formidable barrier of the Highlands. Here the Neutral Ground ceased. The royal army held the two points of land that commanded the southern entrance of the river into the mountains; but all the remaining passes were guarded by the Americans.

We have already stated that the pickets of the continental army were sometimes pushed low into the county, and that the hamlet of the White Plains was occasionally maintained by parties of its troops. At other times the advanced guards were withdrawn to the northern extremity of the county, and, as has been shown, the intermediate country was abandoned to the ravages of the miscreants who plundered between both armies, serving neither.

The road taken by our party was not the one that communicates between the two principal cities of the State, but was a retired and unfrequented pass, that to this hour is but little known, and which, entering the hills near the eastern boundary, emerges into the plain above many miles from the Hudson.

It would have been impossible for the tired steeds of Mr. Wharton to drag the heavy chariot up the lengthened and steep ascents which now lay before them; and a pair of country horses were procured, with but little regard to their owner's wishes, by the two dragoons who still continued to accompany the party. With their assistance Cæsar was enabled to advance, by slow and toilsome steps, into the bosom of the hills. Willing to relieve

her own melancholy by breathing a fresher air, and also to lessen the weight, Frances alighted as they reached the foot of the mountain. She found that Katy had made similar preparations, with the like intention of walking to the summit. It was near the setting of the sun, and, from the top of the mountain, their guard had declared that the end of their journey might be discerned. Frances moved forward with the elastic step of youth; and, followed by the housekeeper at a little distance, she soon lost sight of the sluggish carriage, that was slowly toiling up the hill, occasionally halting to allow the cattle to breathe.

"Oh, Miss Fanny, what dreadful times these be!" said Katy, when they paused for breath themselves; "I know'd that calamity was about to befall, ever sin' the streak of blood was seen in the clouds."

"There has been blood upon earth, Katy, though but little is ever seen in the clouds."

"Not blood in the clouds?" echoed the housekeeper; "yes, that there has, often, and comets with fiery, smoking tails. Didn't people see armed men in the heavens, the year the war begun? and, the night before the battle of the Plains, wasn't there thunder, like the cannon themselves?—Ah! Miss Fanny, I'm fearful that no good can follow rebellion against the Lord's anointed!"

"These events are certainly dreadful," returned Frances, "and enough to sicken the stoutest heart. But what can be done, Katy?—Gallant and independent men are unwilling to submit to oppression; and I am fearful that such scenes are but too common in war."

"If I could but see anything to fight about," said Katy, renewing her walk as the young lady proceeded, "I shouldn't mind it so much. 'Twas said the king wanted all the tea for his own family, at one time; and then again, that he meant the colonies should pay over to him all their earnings. Now this is matter enough to fight about—for I'm sure that no one, however he may be lord or king, has a right to the hard earnings of another. Then it was all contradicted, and some said Washington wanted to be king

himself; so that between the two, one doesn't know which to believe."

"Believe neither—for neither is true. I do not pretend to understand, myself, all the merits of this war, Katy; but to me it seems unnatural that a country like this should be ruled by another so distant as England."

"So I have heard Harvey say to his father, that is dead and in his grave," returned Katy, approaching nearer to the young lady, and lowering her voice. "Many is the good time that I've listened to them talking, when all the neighborhood was asleep; and such conversations, Miss Fanny, that you can have no idea on!—Well, to say the truth, Harvey was a mystified body, and he was like the winds in the good book; no one could tell whence he came, or whither he went."

Frances glanced her eye at her companion with an apparent desire to hear more.

"There are rumors abroad relative to the character of Harvey," she said, "that I should be sorry were true."

"'Tis a disparagement, every word on't," cried Katy, vehemently; "Harvey had no more dealings with Beelzebub than you or I had. I'm sure if Harvey had sold himself, he would take care to be better paid; though, to tell the truth, he was always a wasteful and disregardful man."

"Nay, nay," returned the smiling Frances; "I have no such injurious suspicion of him; but has he not sold himself to an earthly prince—one too much attached to the interests of his native island to be always just to this country?"

"To the king's majesty!" replied Katy. "Why, Miss Fanny, your own brother that is in jail serves King George."

"True," said Frances, "but not in secret—openly, manfully, and bravely."

"'Tis said he is a spy, and why ain't one as bad as another?"

"'Tis untrue; no act of deception is worthy of my brother; nor of any would he be guilty, for so base a purpose as gain or promotion."

"Well, I'm sure," said Katy, a little

appalled at the manner of the young lady, "if a body does the work he should be paid for it. Harvey is by no means partic'lar about getting his lawful dues; and I dar'st to say, if the truth was forthcoming, King George owes him money this very minute."

"Then you acknowledge his connection with the British army," said Frances; "I confess there have been moments when I have thought differently."

"Lord, Miss Fanny, Harvey is a man that no calculation can be made on. Though I lived in his house for a long concourse of years, I have never known whether he belonged above or below.* The time that Burg'yne was taken, he came home, and there was great doings between him and the old gentleman, but for the life I couldn't tell if 'twas joy or grief. Then here, the other day, when the great British general—I'm sure I have been so flurried with losses and troubles that I forgot his name——"

"André," said Frances.

"Yes, Ondree; when he was hanged, acrost the Tappan, the old gentleman was near hand to going crazy about it, and didn't sleep for night nor day, till Harvey got back; and then his money was mostly golden guineas, but the Skinners took it all, and now he is a beggar, or what's the same thing, despicable for poverty and want."

To this speech Frances made no reply, but continued her walk up the hill, deeply engaged in her own reflections. The allusion to André had recalled her thoughts to the situation of her own brother.

They soon reached the highest point in their toilsome progress to the summit, and Frances seated herself on a rock to rest and to admire. Immediately at her feet lay a deep dell, but little altered by cultivation, and dark with the gloom of a November sunset. Another hill rose opposite to the place where she sat, at no great distance, along whose rugged sides nothing was to be seen but shapeless

* The American party was called the party belonging "above," and the British that of "below." The terms had reference to the course of the Hudson.

rocks, and oaks whose stunted growth showed a meager soil.

To be seen in their perfection, the Highlands must be passed immediately after the fall of the leaf. The scene is then the finest, for neither the scanty foliage which the summer lends the trees, nor the snows of winter, are present to conceal the minutest object from the eye. Chilling solitude is the characteristic of the scenery; nor is the mind at liberty, as in March, to look forward to a renewed vegetation that is soon to check, without improving, the view.

The day had been cloudy and cool, and the thin fleecy clouds hung around the horizon, often promising to disperse, but as frequently disappointing Frances in the hope of catching a parting gleam from the setting sun. At length, a solitary gleam struck on the base of the mountain on which she was gazing, and moved gracefully up its side, until, reaching the summit, it stood for a minute, forming a crown of glory to the somber pile. So strong were the rays, that what was before indistinct now clearly opened to the view. With a feeling of awe at being thus unexpectedly admitted, as it were, into the secrets of this desert place, Frances gazed intently, until, among the scattered trees and fantastic rocks, something like a rude structure was seen. It was low, and so obscured by the color of its materials, that but for its roof and the glittering of a window, it must have escaped her notice.

While yet lost in the astonishment created by discovering a habitation in such a spot, on moving her eyes she perceived another object that increased her wonder. It apparently was a human figure, but of singular mold and unusual deformity. It stood on the edge of a rock, a little above the hut, and it was no difficult task for our heroine to fancy it was gazing at the vehicles that were ascending the side of the mountain beneath her. The distance, however, was too great to distinguish with precision. After looking at it a moment in breathless wonder, Frances had just come to the conclusion that it was ideal, and that what she saw was a part of the

rock itself, when the object moved swiftly from its position, and glided into the hut, at once removing every doubt as to the nature of either. Whether it was owing to the recent conversation that she had been holding with Katy, or to some fancied resemblance that she discerned, Frances thought, as the figure vanished from her view, that it bore a marked likeness to Birch, moving under the weight of his pack. She continued to gaze toward the mysterious residence, when the gleam of light passed away, and at the same instant the tones of a bugle rang through the glens and hollows, and were re-echoed in every direction. Springing on her feet, the alarmed girl heard the trampling of horses, and directly a party in the well-known uniforms of the Virginians came sweeping round the point of rock near her, and drew up at a short distance. Again the bugle sounded a lively strain, and before the agitated Frances had time to rally her thoughts, Dunwoodie dashed by the party of dragoons, threw himself from his charger, and advanced to her side.

His manner was earnest and interested, but in a slight degree constrained. In a few words he explained that he had been ordered up, with a party of Lawton's men, in the absence of the captain himself, to attend the trial of Henry, which was fixed for the morrow; and that, anxious for their safety in the rude passes of the mountain, he had ridden a mile or two in quest of the travelers. Frances explained with a trembling voice the reason of her being in advance, and taught him momentarily to expect the arrival of her father. The constraint of his manner had, however unwillingly on her part, communicated itself to her own deportment, and the approach of the chariot was a relief to both. The major handed her in, spoke a few words of encouragement to Mr. Wharton and to Miss Peyton, and again mounting, led the way toward the plains of Fishkill, which broke on their sight, on turning the rock, with the effect of enchantment. A short half-hour brought them to the door of the farmhouse, which the care of Dunwoodie had already prepared for their reception, and

where Captain Wharton was anxiously expecting their arrival.

CHAPTER XXVI.

These limbs are strengthen'd with a soldier's toil,
Nor has this cheek been ever blanch'd with fear—
But this sad tale of thine enervates all
Within me that I once could boast as man;
Chill trembling agues seize upon my frame,
And tears of childish sorrow pour, apace,
Through scarred channels that were mark'd by
wounds.

—DUO.

THE friends of Henry Wharton had placed so much reliance on his innocence, that they were unable to see the full danger of his situation. As the moment of trial, however, approached, the uneasiness of the youth himself increased; and after spending most of the night with his afflicted family, he awoke, on the following morning, from a short and disturbed slumber, to a clearer sense of his condition, and a survey of the means that were to extricate him from it with life. The rank of André, and the importance of the measures he was plotting, together with the powerful intercessions that had been made in his behalf, occasioned his execution to be stamped with greater notoriety than the ordinary events of the war. But spies were frequently arrested; and the instances that occurred of summary punishment for this crime were numerous. These were facts that were well known to both Dunwoodie and the prisoner; and to their experienced judgments the preparations for the trial were indeed alarming. Notwithstanding their apprehensions, they succeeded so far in concealing them, that neither Miss Peyton nor Frances was aware of their extent. A strong guard was stationed in the out-building of the farm-house where the prisoner was quartered, and several sentinels watched the avenues that approached the dwelling. Another was constantly near the room of the British officer. A court was already detailed to examine into the circumstances; and upon their decision the fate of Henry rested.

The moment at length arrived, and the

different actors in the approaching investigation assembled. Frances experienced a feeling like suffocation as, after taking her seat in the midst of her family, her eyes wandered over the group who were thus collected. The judges, three in number, sat by themselves, clad in the vestments of their profession, and maintained a gravity worthy of the occasion and becoming in their rank. In the center was a man of advanced years, and whose whole exterior bore the stamp of early and long-tried military habits. This was the president of the court; and Frances, after taking a hasty and unsatisfactory view of his associates, turned to his benevolent countenance as to the harbinger of mercy to her brother. There was a melting and subdued expression in the features of the veteran, that, contrasted with the rigid decency and composure of the others, could not fail to attract her notice. His attire was strictly in conformity to the prescribed rules of the service to which he belonged; but while his air was erect and military, his fingers trifled, with a kind of convulsive and unconscious motion, with a bit of crape that entwined the hilt of the sword on which his body partly reclined, and which, like himself, seemed a relic of older times. There were the workings of an unquiet soul within; but his military front blended awe with the pity that its exhibition excited. His associates were officers selected from the eastern troops, who held the fortresses of West Point and the adjacent passes; they were men who had attained the meridian of life, and the eye sought in vain the expression of any passion or emotion on which it might seize as an indication of human infirmity. In their demeanor there was a mild, but a grave, intellectual reserve. If there was no ferocity nor harshness to chill, neither was there compassion nor interest to attract. They were men who had long acted under the dominion of a prudent reason, and whose feelings seemed trained to a perfect submission to their judgments.

Before these arbiters of his fate Henry Wharton was ushered, under the custody

of armed men. A profound and awful silence succeeded his entrance, and the blood of Frances chilled as she noted the grave character of the whole proceedings. There was but little pomp in the preparations to impress her imagination; but the reserved, business-like air of the whole scene made it seem, indeed, as if the destinies of life awaited the result. Two of the judges sat in grave reserve, fixing their inquiring eyes on the object of their investigation; but the president continued gazing around with uneasy, convulsive motions of the muscles of the face, that indicated a restlessness foreign to his years and duty. It was Colonel Singleton, who, but the day before, had learned the fate of Isabella, but who stood forth in the discharge of a duty that his country required at his hands. The silence, and the expectation in every eye, at length struck him, and making an effort to collect himself, he spoke, in the tones of one used to authority.

"Bring forth the prisoner," he said, with a wave of the hand.

The sentinels dropped the points of their bayonets toward the judges, and Henry Wharton advanced, with a firm step, into the center of the apartment. All was now anxiety and eager curiosity. Frances turned for a moment in grateful emotion, as the deep and perturbed breathing of Dunwoodie reached her ears; but her brother again concentrated all her interest in one feeling of intense care. In the background were arranged the inmates of the family who owned the dwelling, and behind them, again, was a row of shining faces of ebony, glistening with pleased wonder. Among these was the faded luster of Cæsar Thompson's countenance.

"You are said," continued the president, "to be Henry Wharton, a captain in his Britannic Majesty's 60th Regiment of Foot."

"I am."

"I like your candor, sir; it partakes of the honorable feelings of a soldier, and cannot fail to impress your judges favorably."

"It would be prudent," said one of his companions, "to advise the prisoner that

he is bound to answer no more than he deems necessary; although we are a court of martial law, yet, in this respect, we own the principles of all free governments."

A nod of approbation from the silent members was bestowed on this remark, and the president proceeded with caution, referring to the minutes he held in his hand. "It is an accusation against you, that being an officer of the enemy, you passed the pickets of the American army at the White Plains, in disguise, on the 29th of October last, whereby you are suspected of views hostile to the interests of America, and have subjected yourself to the punishment of a spy."

The mild but steady tones of the speaker, as he slowly repeated the substance of this charge, were full of authority. The accusation was so plain, the facts so limited, the proof so obvious, and the penalty so well established, that escape seemed impossible. But Henry replied, with earnest grace:

"That I passed your pickets in disguise, is true; but——"

"Peace!" interrupted the president; "the usages of war are stern enough in themselves; you need not aid them to your own condemnation."

"The prisoner can retract that declaration, if he please," remarked another judge. "His confession, if taken, goes fully to prove the charge."

"I retract nothing that is true," said Henry, proudly.

The two nameless judges heard him in silent composure, yet there was no exaltation mingled with their gravity. The president now appeared, however, to take a new interest in the scene.

"Your sentiment is noble, sir," he said; "I only regret that a youthful soldier should so far be misled by loyalty as to lend himself to the purposes of deceit."

"Deceit!" echoed Wharton; "I thought it prudent to guard against capture from my enemies."

"A soldier, Captain Wharton, should never meet his enemy but openly, and with arms in his hands. I have served two kings of England, as I now serve my

native land; but never did I approach a foe unless under the light of the sun, and with honest notice that an enemy was nigh."

"You are at liberty to explain what your motives were in entering the ground held by our army, in disguise," said the other judge, with a slight movement of the muscles of his mouth.

"I am the son of this aged man before you," continued Henry. "It was to visit him that I encountered the danger. Besides, the country below is seldom held by your troops, and its very name implies a right to either party to move at pleasure over its territory."

"Its name, as a neutral ground, is unauthorized by law; it is an appellation that originates with the condition of the country. But wherever an army goes, it carries its rights along, and the first is the ability to protect itself."

"I am no casuist, sir," returned the youth; "but I feel that my father is entitled to my affection, and I would encounter greater risks to prove it to him in his old age."

"A very commendable spirit," cried the veteran. "Come, gentlemen, this business brightens; I confess at first it was very bad; but no man can censure him for desiring to see his parents."

"And have you proof that such only was your intention?"

"Yes—here," said Henry, admitting a ray of hope; "here is proof—my father, my sister, Major Dunwoodie, all know it."

"Then, indeed," returned his immovable judge, "we may be able to save you. It would be well, sir, to examine further into this business."

"Certainly," said the president, with alacrity; "let the older Mr. Wharton approach and take the oath."

The father made an effort at composure, and, advancing with a feeble step, he complied with the necessary forms of the court.

"You are the father of the prisoner?" said Colonel Singleton, in a subdued voice, after pausing a moment in respect for the agitation of the witness.

"He is my only son."

"And what do you know of his visit to your house, on the 29th day of October last?"

"He came, as he told you, to see me and his sisters."

"Was he in disguise?" asked the other judge.

"He did not wear the uniform of the 60th."

"To see his sisters, too!" said the president, with great emotion. "Have you daughters, sir?"

"I have two—both are in this house."

"Had he a wig?" interrupted the officer.

"There was some such thing, I do believe, upon his head."

"And how long had you been separated?" asked the president.

"One year and two months."

"Did he wear a loose great-coat of coarse material?" inquired the officer, referring to the paper that contained the charges.

"There was an overcoat."

"And you think that it was to see you, only, that he came out?"

"Me, and my daughters."

"A boy of spirit," whispered the president to his silent comrade. "I see but little harm in such a freak; 'twas imprudent, but then it was kind."

"Do you know that your son was intrusted with no commission from Sir Henry Clinton, and that the visit to you was not merely a cloak to other designs?"

"How can I know it?" said Mr. Wharton, in alarm; "would Sir Henry intrust me with such a business?"

"Know you anything of this pass?" exhibiting the paper that Dunwoodie had retained when Wharton was taken.

"Nothing—upon my honor, nothing," cried the father, shrinking from the paper as from contagion.

"On your oath?"

"Nothing."

"Have you other testimony?—this does not avail you, Captain Wharton. You have been taken in a situation where your life is forfeited; the labor of proving your innocence rests with yourself. Take time to reflect, and be cool."

There was a frightful calmness in the manner of this judge that appalled the prisoner. In the sympathy of Colonel Singleton, he could easily lose sight of his danger; but the obdurate and collected air of the others was ominous of his fate. He continued silent, casting imploring glances toward his friend. Dunwoodie understood the appeal, and offered himself as a witness. He was sworn, and desired to relate what he knew. His statement did not materially alter the case, and Dunwoodie felt that it could not. To him personally but little was known, and that little rather militated against the safety of Henry than otherwise. His account was listened to in silence, and the significant shake of the head that was made by the silent member spoke too plainly what effect it had produced.

"Still you think that the prisoner had no other object than what he has avowed?" said the president, when he had ended.

"None other, I will pledge my life," cried the major, with fervor.

"Will you swear it?" asked the immovable judge.

"How can I? God alone can tell the heart; but I have known this gentleman from a boy; deceit never formed part of his character. He is above it."

"You say that he escaped, and was retaken in open arms?" said the president.

"He was; nay, he received a wound in the combat. You see he yet moves his arm with difficulty. Would he, think you, sir, have trusted himself where he could fall again into our hands, unless conscious of innocence?"

"Would André have deserted a field of battle, Major Dunwoodie, had he encountered such an event, near Tarrytown?" asked his deliberate examiner. "Is it not natural to youth to seek glory?"

"Do you call this glory?" exclaimed the major; "an ignominious death, and a tarnished name."

"Major Dunwoodie," returned the other, still with inveterate gravity, "you have acted nobly; your duty has been arduous and severe, but it has been faithfully and honorably discharged; ours must not be less so."

During the examination, the most intense interest prevailed among the hearers. With that kind of feeling which could not separate the principle from the cause, most of the auditors thought that if Dunwoodie failed to move the hearts of Henry's judges, no other possessed the power. Cæsar thrust his misshapen form forward; and his features, so expressive of the concern he felt, and so different from the vacant curiosity pictured in the countenances of the other blacks, caught the attention of the silent judge. For the first time he spoke:

"Let that black be brought forward."

It was too late to retreat, and Cæsar found himself confronted with a row of rebel officers, before he knew what was uppermost in his thoughts. The others yielded the examination to the one who suggested it, and using all due deliberation, he proceeded accordingly.

"You know the prisoner?"

"I tink he ought," returned the black, in a manner as sententious as that of his examiner.

"Did he give you the wig, when he threw it aside?"

"I don't want 'em," grumbled Cæsar; "got a berry good hair he'self."

"Were you employed in carrying any letters or messages while Captain Wharton was in your master's house?"

"I do what a tell me," returned the black.

"But what did they tell you to do?"

"Sometimes a one ting—sometimes another."

"Enough," said Colonel Singleton, with dignity; "you have the noble acknowledgment of a gentleman, what more can you obtain from this slave? Captain Wharton, you perceive the unfortunate impression against you. Have you other testimony to adduce?"

To Henry there now remained but little hope; his confidence in his security was fast ebbing; with an indefinite expectation of assistance from the loveliness of his sister, he fixed an earnest gaze on the pallid features of Frances. She arose, and with a tottering step moved toward the judges; the paleness of her cheek contin-

ued but for a moment, and gave place to a flush of fire, and with a light but firm tread, she stood before them. Raising her hand to her polished forehead, Frances threw aside her exuberant locks, and displayed a picture of beauty and innocence to their view that might have moved even sterner natures. The president shrouded his eyes for a moment, as if the wild eye and speaking countenance recalled the image of another. The movement was transient, and recovering himself, he said, with an earnestness that betrayed secret wishes :

"To you, then, your brother previously communicated his intention of paying your family a secret visit?"

"No!—no!" said Frances, pressing her hand on her brain, as if to collect her thoughts; "he told me nothing—we knew not of the visit until he arrived; but can it be necessary to explain to gallant men, that a child would incur hazard to meet his only parent, and that in times like these, and in a situation like ours?"

"But was this the first time? Did he never talk of doing so before?" inquired the colonel, leaning toward her with paternal interest.

"Certainly—certainly," cried Frances, catching the expression of his own benevolent countenance. "This is but the fourth of his visits."

"I knew it," exclaimed the veteran, rubbing his hands with delight; "an adventurous, warm-hearted son—I warrant me, gentlemen, a fiery soldier in the field! In what disguise did he come?"

"In none, for none were then necessary; the royal troops covered the country, and gave him safe passage."

"And was this the first of his visits out of the uniform of his regiment?" asked the colonel, in a suppressed voice, avoiding the penetrating looks of his companions.

"Oh! the very first," exclaimed the eager girl; "his first offense, I do assure you, if offense it be."

"But you wrote him—you urged the visit; surely, young lady, you wished to see your brother?" added the impatient colonel.

"That we wished it, and prayed for it—oh, how fervently we prayed for it!—is true; but to have held communion with the royal army would have endangered our father, and we dared not."

"Did he leave the house until taken, or had he intercourse with any out of your own dwelling?"

"With none—no one, excepting our neighbor, the peddler Birch."

"With whom?" exclaimed the colonel, turning pale, and shrinking as from the sting of an adder.

Dunwoodie groaned aloud, and striking his head with his hand, cried, in piercing tones, "He is lost!" and rushed from the apartment.

"But Harvey Birch," repeated Frances, gazing wildly at the door through which her lover had disappeared.

"Harvey Birch!" echoed all the judges. The two immovable members of the court exchanged looks, and threw an inquisitive glance at their prisoner.

"To you, gentlemen, it can be no new intelligence to hear that Harvey Birch is suspected of favoring the royal cause," said Henry, again advancing before the judges; "for he has already been condemned by your tribunals to the fate that I now see awaits myself. I will therefore explain, that it was by his assistance I procured the disguise, and passed your pickets; but to my dying moment, and with my dying breath, I will avow that my intentions were as pure as the innocent being before you."

"Captain Wharton," said the president, solemnly, "the enemies of American liberty have made mighty and subtle efforts to overthrow our power. A more dangerous man, for his means and education, is not ranked among our foes than this peddler of Westchester. He is a spy—artful, delusive, and penetrating beyond the abilities of any of his class. Sir Henry could not do better than to associate him with the officer in his next attempt. He would have saved André. Indeed, young man, this is a connection that may prove fatal to you."

The honest indignation that beamed on the countenance of the aged warrior was

met by a look of perfect conviction on the part of his comrades.

"I have ruined him!" cried Frances, clasping her hands in terror; "do you desert us? then he is lost, indeed!"

"Forbear! — lovely innocent — forbear!" said the colonel, with strong emotion; "you injure none, but distress us all."

"Is it then such a crime to possess natural affection?" said Frances, wildly; "would Washington—the noble, upright, impartial Washington—judge so harshly? Delay, till Washington can hear his tale."

"It is impossible," said the president, covering his eyes, as if to hide her beauty from his view.

"Impossible! Oh! but for a week suspend your judgment. On my knees I entreat you, as you will expect mercy yourself, when no human power can avail you, give him but a day."

"It is impossible," repeated the colonel, in a voice that was nearly choked; "our orders are peremptory, and too long delay has been given already."

He turned from the kneeling suppliant, but could not, or would not, extricate the hand that she grasped with frenzied fervor.

"Remand your prisoner," said one of the judges to the officer who had the charge of Henry. "Colonel Singleton, shall we withdraw?"

"Singleton! Singleton!" echoed Frances; "then you are a father, and know how to pity a father's woes; you cannot, will not, wound a heart that is now nearly crushed. Hear me, Colonel Singleton; as God will listen to your dying prayers, hear me, and spare my brother!"

"Remove her," said the colonel, gently endeavoring to extricate his hand; but none appeared disposed to obey. Frances eagerly strove to read the expression of his averted face, and resisted all his efforts to retire.

"Colonel Singleton! how lately was your own son in suffering and in danger! under the roof of my father he was cherished—under my father's roof he found shelter and protection. Oh! suppose that

son, the pride of your age, the solace and protection of your infant children, and then pronounce my brother guilty, if you dare!"

"What right has Heath to make an executioner of me!" exclaimed the veteran, fiercely, rising with a face flushed like fire, and every vein and artery swollen with suppressed emotion. "But I forget myself; come, gentlemen, let us mount; our painful duty must be done."

"Mount not! go not!" shrieked Frances; "can you tear a son from his parent? a brother from his sister, so coldly? Is this the cause I have so ardently loved? Are these the men that I have been taught to reverence? But you relent, you do hear me, you will pity and forgive."

"Lead on, gentlemen," said the colonel, motioning toward the door, and erecting himself into an air of military grandeur, in the vain hope of quieting his feelings.

"Lead not on, but hear me," cried Frances, grasping his hand convulsively; "Colonel Singleton, you are a father!—pity—mercy—mercy for the son! mercy for the daughter! Yes—you had a daughter. On this bosom she poured out her last breath; these hands closed her eyes; these very hands, that are now clasped in prayer, did those offices for her that you condemn my poor, poor brother to require."

One mighty emotion the veteran struggled with, and quelled; but with a groan that shook his whole frame. He even looked around in conscious pride at his victory; but a second burst of feelings conquered. His head, white with the frost of seventy winters, sank upon the shoulder of the frantic suppliant. The sword that had been his companion in so many fields of blood dropped from his nerveless hand, and as he cried:

"May God bless you for the deed!" he wept aloud.

Long and violent was the indulgence that Colonel Singleton yielded to his feelings. On recovering, he gave the senseless Frances into the arms of her aunt, and, turning with an air of fortitude to his comrades, he said:

"Still, gentlemen, we have our duty as

officers to discharge ;—our feelings as men may be indulged hereafter. What is your pleasure with the prisoner ?”

One of the judges placed in his hand a written sentence, that he had prepared while the colonel was engaged with Frances, and declared it to be the opinion of himself and his companion.

It briefly stated that Henry Wharton had been detected in passing the lines of the American army as a spy, and in disguise. That thereby, according to the laws of war, he was liable to suffer death, and that this court adjudged him to the penalty ; recommending him to be executed, by hanging, before nine o'clock on the following morning.

It was not usual to inflict capital punishment, even on the enemy, without referring the case to the commander-in-chief for his approbation ; or, in his absence, to the officer commanding for the time being. But, as Washington held his headquarters at New Windsor, on the western bank of the Hudson, sufficient time was yet before them to receive his answer.

“This is short notice,” said the veteran, holding the pen in his hand in a suspense that had no object ; “not a day to fit one so young for heaven ?”

“The royal officers gave Hale* but an hour,” returned his comrade ; “we have granted the usual time. But Washington has the power to extend it, or to pardon.”

“Then to Washington will I go,” cried the colonel, returning the paper with his signature ; “and if the services of an old man like me, or that brave boy of mine, entitle me to his ear, I will yet save the youth.”

*An American officer of this name was detected within the British lines in disguise, in search of military information. He was tried and executed, as stated in the text, as soon as the preparations could be made. It is said that he was reproached under the gallows with dishonoring the rank he held by his fate. “What a death for an officer to die !” said one of his captors.—“Gentlemen, any death is honorable when a man dies in a cause like that of America,” was his answer.

Andre was executed amid the tears of his enemies : Hale died unpitied, and with reproaches in his ears ; and yet one was the victim of ambition, and the other of devotion to his country. Posterity will do justice between them.

So saying he departed, full of his generous intentions in favor of Henry Wharton.

The sentence of the court was communicated, with proper tenderness, to the prisoner ; and after giving a few necessary instructions to the officer in command, and dispatching a courier to headquarters with their report, the remaining judges mounted and rode to their own quarters, with the same unmoved exterior, but with the consciousness of the same dispassionate integrity that they had maintained throughout the trial.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Have you no countermand for Claudio yet ?
But he must die to-morrow ?

—MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

A FEW hours were passed by the prisoner, after his sentence was received, in the bosom of his family. Mr. Wharton wept in hopeless despondency over the untimely fate of his son ; and Frances, after recovering from her insensibility, experienced an anguish of feeling to which the bitterness of death itself would have been comparatively light. Miss Peyton alone retained a vestige of hope, or presence of mind to suggest what might be proper to be done under their circumstances. The comparative composure of the good aunt arose in no degree from any want of interest in the welfare of her nephew, but it was founded in a kind of instinctive dependence on the character of Washington. He was a native of the same colony with herself ; and although his early military services, and her frequent visits to the family of her sister, and subsequent establishment at its head, had prevented their ever meeting, still she was familiar with his domestic virtues, and well knew that the rigid inflexibility for which his public acts were distinguished formed no part of his reputation in private life.

He was known in Virginia as a consistent, but just and lenient, master ; and she felt a kind of pride in associating in her mind her countryman with the man who led the armies, and in a great measure,

controlled the destinies of America. She knew that Henry was innocent of the crime for which he was condemned to suffer, and, with that kind of simple faith that is ever to be found in the most ingenious characters, could not conceive of those constructions and interpretations of law that inflicted punishment without the actual existence of crime. But even her confiding hopes were doomed to meet with a speedy termination. Toward noon, a regiment of militia, that was quartered on the banks of the river, moved up to the ground in front of the house that held our heroine and her family, and deliberately pitched their tents, with the avowed intention of remaining until the following morning, to give solemnity and effect to the execution of a British spy.

Dunwoodie had performed all that was required of him by his orders, and was at liberty to retrace his steps to his expecting squadron, which was impatiently waiting his return, to be led against a detachment of the enemy, that was known to be slowly moving up the banks of the river, in order to cover a party of foragers in its rear. He was accompanied by a small party of Lawton's troop, under the expectation that their testimony might be required to convict the prisoner; and Mason, the lieutenant, was in command. But the confession of Captain Wharton had removed the necessity of examining any witnesses on behalf of the people.*

The major, from an unwillingness to encounter the distress of Henry's friends, and a dread of trusting himself within its influence, had spent the time we had mentioned in walking by himself, in keen anxiety, at a short distance from the dwelling. Like Miss Peyton, he had some reliance on the mercy of Washington, although moments of terrific doubt and despondency were continually crossing his mind. To him the rules of service were familiar, and he was more accustomed to consider his general in the capacity of a ruler, than as exhibiting the characteristics of the individual. A dreadful in-

stance had too recently occurred, which fully proved that Washington was above the weakness of sparing another in mercy to himself. While pacing with hurried steps through the orchard, laboring under these constantly recurring doubts, enlivened by transient rays of hope, Mason approached, accoutered completely for the saddle.

"Thinking that you might have forgotten the news brought this morning from below, sir, I have taken the liberty to order the detachment under arms," said the lieutenant, very coolly, cutting down with his sheathed saber the mullin tops that grew within his reach.

"What news?" cried the major, starting.

"Only that John Bull is out in Westchester, with a train of wagons, which, if he fills, will compel us to retire through these cursed hills in search of provender. These greedy Englishmen are so shut up on York Island, that when they do venture out, they seldom leave straw enough to furnish the bed of a Yankee heiress."

"Where did the express leave them, did you say? The intelligence has entirely escaped my memory."

"On the heights above Sing-Sing," returned the lieutenant, with no little amazement. "The road below looks like a hay-market, and all the swine are sighing forth their lamentations as the corn passes them toward Kingsbridge. George Singleton's orderly, who brought up the tidings, says that our horses were holding consultation if they should not go down without their riders and eat another meal, for it is questionable with them whether they can get a full stomach again. If they are suffered to get back with their plunder, we shall not be able to find a piece of pork at Christmas fat enough to fry itself."

"Peace, with all this nonsense of Singleton's orderly, Mr. Mason," cried Dunwoodie, impatiently; "let him learn to wait the orders of his superiors."

"I beg pardon in his name, Major Dunwoodie," said the subaltern; "but, like myself, he was in error. We both thought it was the order of General Heath to at-

* In America, justice is administered in the name of "the good people," etc., etc.; the sovereignty residing with them.

tack and molest the enemy whenever he ventured out of his nest."

"Recollect yourself, Lieutenant Mason," said the major, "or I may have to teach you that your orders pass through me."

"I know it, Major Dunwoodie—I know it; and I am sorry that your memory is so bad as to forget that I never have yet hesitated to obey them."

"Forgive me, Mason," cried Dunwoodie, taking both his hands; "I do know you for a brave and obedient soldier; forget my humor. But this business—Had you ever a friend?"

"Nay, nay," interrupted the lieutenant; "forgive me and my honest zeal. I knew of the orders, and was fearful that censure might fall on my officer. But remain, and let a man breathe a syllable against the corps, and every sword will start from the scabbard of itself; besides, they are still moving up, and it is a long road from Croton to Kingsbridge. Happen what may, I see plainly that we shall be on their heels before they are housed again."

"Oh! that the courier was returned from headquarters!" exclaimed Dunwoodie. "This suspense is insupportable."

"You have your wish," cried Mason; "here he is at the moment, and riding like the bearer of good news. God send it may be so; for I can't say that I particularly like myself to see a brave young fellow dancing upon nothing."

Dunwoodie heard but very little of this feeling declaration; for, ere half of it was uttered, he had leaped the fence and stood before the messenger.

"What news?" cried the major, the moment that the soldier stopped his horse.

"Good!" exclaimed the man; and feeling no hesitation to intrust an officer so well-known as Major Dunwoodie, he placed the paper in his hands, as he added, "but you can read it, sir, for yourself."

Dunwoodie paused not to read, but flew, with the elastic spring of joy, to the chamber of the prisoner. The sentinel knew him, and he was suffered to pass without question.

"Oh! Peyton," cried Frances, as he entered the apartment, "you look like a messenger from heaven! bring you tidings of mercy?"

"Here, Frances—here, Henry—here, dear cousin Jeanette," cried the youth, as with trembling hands he broke the seal; "here is the letter itself, directed to the captain of the guard. But listen——"

All did listen with intense anxiety; and the pang of blasted hope was added to their misery, as they saw the glow of delight which had beamed on the countenance of the major give place to a look of horror. The paper contained the sentence of the court, and underneath was written these simple words:

"Approved—GEO. WASHINGTON."

"He's lost! he's lost!" cried Frances, sinking into the arms of her aunt.

"My son! my son!" sobbed the father, "there is mercy in heaven, if there is none on earth. May Washington never want that mercy he thus denies to my innocent child!"

"Washington!" echoed Dunwoodie, gazing around him in vacant horror. "Yes, 'tis the act of Washington himself; these are his characters; his very name is here, to sanction the dreadful deed."

"Cruel, cruel Washington!" cried Miss Peyton; "how has his familiarity with blood changed his nature!"

"Blame him not," said Dunwoodie; "it is the general, and not the man; my life on it he feels the blow he is compelled to inflict."

"I have been deceived in him," cried Frances. "He is not the savior of his country, but a cold and merciless tyrant. Oh! Peyton, Peyton! how have you misled me in his character!"

"Peace, dear Frances; peace, for God's sake; use not such language. He is but the guardian of the law."

"You speak the truth, Major Dunwoodie," said Henry, recovering from the shock of having his last ray of hope extinguished, and advancing from his seat by the side of his father. "I, who am to suffer, blame him not. Every indulgence has been granted me that I can ask. On the verge of the grave, I cannot continue

unjust. At such a moment, with so recent an instance of danger to your cause from treason, I wonder not at Washington's unbending justice. Nothing now remains but to prepare for that fate which so speedily awaits me. To you, Major Dunwoodie, I make my first request."

"Name it," said the major, giving utterance with difficulty.

Henry turned, and pointing to the group of weeping mourners near him, he continued:

"Be a son to this aged man; help his weakness, and defend him from any usage to which the stigma thrown upon me may subject him. He has not many friends among the rulers of this country; let your powerful name be found among them."

"It shall."

"And this helpless innocent," continued Henry, pointing to where Sarah sat, unconscious of what was passing—"I had hoped for an opportunity to avenge her wrong;" a flush of excitement passed over his features; "but such thoughts are evil—I feel them to be wrong. Under your care, Peyton, she will find sympathy and refuge."

"She shall," whispered Dunwoodie.

"This good aunt has claims upon you already; of her I will not speak; but here," taking the hand of Frances, and dwelling upon her countenance with an expression of fraternal affection—"here is the choicest gift of all. Take her to your bosom, and cherish her as you would cultivate innocence and virtue."

The major could not repress the eagerness with which he extended his hand to receive the precious boon; but Frances, shrinking from his touch, hid her face in the bosom of her aunt.

"No, no, no!" she murmured; "none can ever be anything to me who aid in my brother's destruction."

Henry continued gazing at her in tender pity for several moments, before he again resumed a discourse that all felt was most peculiarly his own.

"I have been mistaken, then. I did think, Peyton, that your worth, your noble devotion to a cause that you have been taught to revere, that your kindness to

our father when in imprisonment, your friendship for me—in short, that your character was understood and valued by my sister."

"It is—it is," whispered Frances, burying her face still deeper in the bosom of her aunt.

"I believe, dear Henry," said Dunwoodie, "this is a subject that had better not be dwelt upon now."

"You forget," returned the prisoner, with a faint smile, "how much I have to do, and how little time is left to do it in."

"I apprehend," continued the major, with a face of fire, "that Miss Wharton has imbibed some opinions of me that would make a compliance with your request irksome to her—opinions that it is now too late to alter."

"No, no, no," cried Frances, quickly; "you are exonerated. Peyton, with her dying breath she removed my doubts."

"Generous Isabella!" murmured Dunwoodie; "but still, Henry, spare your sister now; nay, spare even me."

"I speak in pity to myself," returned the brother, gently removing Frances from the arms of her aunt. "What a time is this to leave two such lovely females without a protector! Their abode is destroyed, and misery will soon speedily deprive them of their last male friend," looking at his father; "can I die in peace with the knowledge of the danger to which they will be exposed?"

"You forget me," said Miss Peyton, shrinking at the idea of celebrating nuptials at such a moment.

"No, my dear aunt, I forget you not, nor shall I, until I cease to remember; but you forget the times and the danger. The good woman who lives in this house has already dispatched a messenger for a man of God, to smooth my passage to another world. Frances, if you would wish me to die in peace, to feel a security that will allow me to turn my whole thoughts to heaven, you will let this clergyman unite you to Dunwoodie."

Frances shook her head, but remained silent.

"I ask for no joy—no demonstration of a felicity that you will not, cannot feel, for

months to come; but obtain a right to his powerful name—give him an undisputed title to protect you——”

Again the maid made an impressive gesture of denial.

“For the sake of that unconscious sufferer”—pointing to Sarah—“for your sake—for my sake—my sister——”

“Peace, Henry, or you will break my heart,” cried the agitated girl; “not for worlds would I at such a moment engage in the solemn vows that you wish. It would render me miserable for life.”

“You love him not,” said Henry, reproachfully. “I cease to importune you to do what is against your inclination.”

Frances raised one hand to conceal her countenance, as she extended the other toward Dunwoodie, and said earnestly:

“Now you are unjust to me—before, you were unjust to yourself.”

“Promise me, then,” said Wharton, musing awhile in silence, “that as soon as the recollection of my fate is softened, you will give my friend that hand for life, and I am satisfied.”

“I do promise,” said Frances, withdrawing the hand that Dunwoodie delicately relinquished, without even presuming to press it to his lips.

“Well, then, my good aunt,” continued Henry, “will you leave me for a short time alone with my friend? I have a few melancholy commissions with which to intrust him, and would spare you and my sister the pain of hearing them.”

“There is yet time to see Washington again,” said Miss Peyton, moving toward the door; and then, speaking with extreme dignity, she continued—“I will go myself, surely he will listen to a woman from his own colony!—and we are in some degree connected with his family.”

“Why not apply to Mr. Harper?” said Frances, recollecting the parting words of their guest for the first time.

“Harper?” echoed Dunwoodie, turning toward her with the swiftness of lightning; “what of him? do you know him?”

“It is vain,” said Henry, drawing him aside; “Frances clings to hope with the fondness of a sister. Retire, my love, and leave me with my friend.”

Frances read an expression in the eye of Dunwoodie that chained her to the spot. After struggling to command her feelings, she continued:

“He stayed with us for two days—he was with us when Henry was arrested.”

“And—and—did you know him?”

“Nay,” continued Frances, catching her breath as she witnessed the intense interest of her lover; “we knew him not; he came to us in the night, a stranger, and remained with us during the severe storm; but he seemed to take an interest in Henry and promised him his friendship.”

“What!” exclaimed the youth, in astonishment; “did he know your brother?”

“Certainly;—it was at his request that Henry threw aside his disguise.”

“But,” said Dunwoodie, turning pale with suspense, “he knew him not as an officer of the royal army?”

“Indeed he did,” cried Miss Peyton; “and he cautioned us against this very danger.”

Dunwoodie caught up the fatal paper, that still lay where it had fallen from his own hands, and studied its characters intently. Something seemed to bewilder his brain. He passed his hand over his forehead, while each eye was fixed on him in dreadful suspense—all feeling afraid to admit those hopes anew that had once been so sadly destroyed.

“What said he? what promised he?” at length Dunwoodie asked, with feverish impatience.

“He bid Henry apply to him when in danger, and promised to requite the son for the hospitality of the father.”

“Said he this, knowing him to be a British officer?”

“Most certainly; and with a view to this very danger.”

“Then,” cried the youth aloud, and yielding to his rapture, “then you are safe—then I will save him; yes, Harper will never forget his word.”

“But has he the power?” said Frances; “can he move the stubborn purpose of Washington?”

“Can he! If he cannot,” shouted the youth, “if he cannot, who can?—Greene and Heath, and young Hamilton, are

nothing compared to this Harper. But," rushing to his mistress, and pressing her hands convulsively, "repeat to me—you say you have his promise?"

"Surely, surely, Peyton;—his solemn, deliberate promise, knowing all of the circumstances."

"Rest easy," cried Dunwoodie, holding her to his bosom for a moment, "rest easy, for Henry is safe."

He waited not to explain, but darting from the room, he left the family in amazement. They continued in silent wonder until they heard the feet of his charger, as he dashed from the door with the speed of an arrow.

A long time was spent after this abrupt departure of the youth, by the anxious friends he had left, in discussing the probability of his success. The confidence of his manner had, however, communicated to his auditors something of his own spirit. Each felt the prospects of Henry were again brightening, and with their reviving hopes they experienced a renewal of spirits, which in all but Henry himself amounted to pleasure; with him, indeed, his state was too awful to admit of trifling, and for a few hours he was condemned to feel how much more intolerable was suspense than even the certainty of calamity. Not so with Frances. She, with all the reliance of affection, reposed in security on the assurance of Dunwoodie, without harassing herself with doubts that she possessed not the means of satisfying; but believing her lover able to accomplish everything that man could do, and retaining a vivid recollection of the manner and benevolent appearance of Harper, she abandoned herself to all the felicity of renovated hope.

The joy of Miss Peyton was more sobered, and she took frequent occasions to reprove her niece for her spirits before there was a certainty that their expectations were to be realized. But the slight smile that hovered around the lips of the virgin contradicted the very sobriety of feeling that she inculcated.

"Why, dearest aunt," said Frances, playfully, in reply to one of her frequent reprimands, "would you have me repress

the pleasure that I feel at Henry's deliverance, when you yourself have so often declared it to be impossible that such men as ruled in our country could sacrifice an innocent man?"

"Nay, I did believe it impossible, my child, and yet think so; but still there is a discretion to be shown in joy as well as in sorrow."

Frances recollected the declaration of Isabella, and turned an eye filled with tears of gratitude on her excellent aunt, as she replied:

"True; but there are feelings that will not yield to reason. Ah! here are those monsters, who have come to witness the death of a fellow-creature, moving around yon field as if life was, to them, nothing but a military show."

"It is but little more to the hireling soldier," said Henry, endeavoring to forget his uneasiness.

"You gaze, my love, as if you thought a military show of some importance," said Miss Peyton, observing her niece to be looking from the window with a fixed and abstracted attention. But Frances answered not.

From the window where she stood, the pass that they had traveled through the Highlands was easily to be seen; and the mountain which held on its summit the mysterious hut was directly before her. Its sides were rugged and barren; huge and apparently impassable barriers of rocks presenting themselves through the stunted oaks, which, stripped of their foliage, were scattered over its surface. The base of the hill was not half a mile from the house, and the object which attracted the notice of Frances was the figure of a man emerging from behind a rock of remarkable formation, and as suddenly disappearing. This maneuver was several times repeated, as if it were the intention of the fugitive (for such by his air he seemed to be) to reconnoiter the proceedings of the soldiery, and assure himself of the position of things on the plain. Notwithstanding the distance, Frances instantly imbibed the opinion that it was Birch. Perhaps this impression was partly owing to the air and figure of the

man, but in a great measure to the idea that presented itself on formerly beholding the object at the summit of the mountain. That they were the same figures she was confident, although this wanted the appearance, which, in the other, she had taken for the pack of the peddler. Harvey had so connected himself with the mysterious deportment of Harper, within her imagination, that under circumstances of less agitation than those in which she had labored since her arrival, she would have kept her suspicions to herself. Frances, therefore, sat ruminating on this second appearance in silence, and endeavoring to trace what possible connection this extraordinary man could have with the fortunes of her own family. He had certainly saved Sarah, in some degree, from the blow that had partially alighted on her, and in no instance had he proved himself to be hostile to their interests.

After gazing for a long time at the point where she had last seen the figure, in the vain expectation of its reappearance, she turned to her friends in the apartment. Miss Peyton was sitting by Sarah, who gave some slight additional signs of observing what passed, but who still continued insensible either to joy or grief.

"I suppose, by this time, my love, that you are well acquainted with the maneuverers of a regiment," said Miss Peyton; "it is no bad quality in a soldier's wife, at all events."

"I am not a wife yet," said Frances, coloring to the eyes; "and we have little reason to wish for another wedding in our family."

"Frances!" exclaimed her brother, starting from his seat and pacing the floor in violent agitation, "touch not the chord again, I entreat you. While my fate is uncertain, I would wish to be at peace with all men,"

"Then let the uncertainty cease," cried Frances, springing to the door, "for here comes Peyton with the joyful intelligence of your release."

The words were hardly uttered before the door opened and the major entered.

In his air there was the appearance of neither success nor defeat, but there was a marked display of vexation. He took the hand that Frances, in the fullness of her heart, extended toward him, but instantly relinquishing it, threw himself into a chair, in evident fatigue.

"You have failed," said Wharton, with a bound of his heart, but an appearance of composure.

"Have you seen Harper?" cried Frances, turning pale.

"I have not; I crossed the river in one boat as he must have been coming to this side in another. I returned without delay, and traced him for several miles into the Highlands, by the western pass, but there I unaccountably lost him. I have returned here to relieve your uneasiness; but see him I will this night, and bring a respite for Henry."

"But you saw Washington?" asked Miss Peyton.

Dunwoodie gazed at her a moment in abstracted musing, and the question was repeated. He answered gravely, and with some reserve:

"The commander-in-chief had left his quarters."

"But, Peyton," cried Frances, in returning terror, "if they should not see each other, it will be too late. Harper alone will not be sufficient."

Her lover turned his eye slowly on her anxious countenance, and dwelling a moment on her features, said, still musing:

"You say that he promised to assist Henry?"

"Certainly, of his own accord, and in requital for the hospitality he had received."

Dunwoodie shook his head, and began to look grave.

"I like not that word hospitality—it has an empty sound; there must be something more reasonable to tie Harper. I dread some mistake: repeat to me all that passed."

Frances, in a hurried and earnest voice, complied with his request. She related particularly the manner of his arrival at the Locusts, the reception that he received, and the events that passed, as minutely

as her memory could supply her with the means. As she alluded to the conversation that occurred between her father and his guest, the major smiled, but remained silent. She then gave a detail of Henry's arrival, and the events of the following day. She dwelt upon the part where Harper had desired her brother to throw aside his disguise, and recounted, with wonderful accuracy, his remarks upon the hazard of the step that the youth had taken. She even remembered a remarkable expression of his to her brother, "that he was safer from Harper's knowledge of his person than he would be without it." Frances mentioned, with the warmth of youthful admiration, the benevolent character of his deportment to herself, and gave a minute relation of his adieux to the whole family.

Dunwoodie at first listened with grave attention; evident satisfaction followed as she proceeded. When she spoke of herself, in connection with their guest, he smiled with pleasure, and as she concluded, he exclaimed with delight:

"We are safe!—we are safe!"

But he was interrupted, as will be seen in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The owlet loves the gloom of night,
The lark salutes the day,
The timid dove will coo at hand—
But falcons soar away.—SONG IN DUO.

IN a country settled, like these States, by a people who fled their native land and much-loved firesides, victims of consciences and religious zeal, none of the decencies and solemnities of a Christian death are dispensed with, when circumstances will admit of their exercise. The good woman of the house was a strict adherent to the forms of the Church to which she belonged; and having herself been awakened to a sense of her depravity by the ministry of the divine who harangued the people of the adjoining parish, she thought it was from his exhortations only that salvation could be meted out to the short-lived hopes of Henry Wharton.

Not that the kind-hearted matron was so ignorant of the doctrines of the religion which she professed as to depend theoretically on mortal aid for protection; but she had, to use her own phrase, "sat so long under the preaching of good Mr. —," that she had unconsciously imbibed a practical reliance on his assistance for that which her faith should have taught her could have come from the Deity alone. With her, the consideration of death was at all times awful; and the instant that the sentence of the prisoner was promulgated, she dispatched Cæsar, mounted on one of her husband's best horses, in quest of her clerical monitor. This step had been taken without consulting either Henry or his friends; and it was only when the services of Cæsar were required on some domestic emergency that she explained the nature of his absence. The youth heard her, at first, with an unconquerable reluctance to admit of such a spiritual guide; but as our view of the things of this life becomes less vivid, our prejudices and habits cease to retain their influence; and a civil bow of thanks was finally given in requital for the considerate care of the well-meaning woman.

The black returned early from his expedition, and, as well as could be gathered from his somewhat incoherent narrative, a minister of God might be expected to arrive in the course of the day. The interruption that we mentioned in our preceding chapter was occasioned by the entrance of the landlady. At the intercession of Dunwoodie, orders had been given to the sentinel who guarded the door of Henry's room, that the members of the prisoner's family should, at all times, have free access to his apartment. Cæsar was included in this arrangement, as a matter of convenience, by the officer in command; but strict inquiry and examination was made into the errand of every other applicant for admission. The major had, however, included himself among the relatives of the British officer; and one pledge, that no rescue should be attempted, was given in his name for them all. A short conversation was passing between the woman of

the house and the corporal of the guard, before the door that the sentinel had already opened in anticipation of the decision of his non-commissioned commandant.

"Would you refuse the consolations of religion to a fellow-creature about to suffer death?" said the matron, with earnest zeal. "Would you plunge a soul into the fiery furnace, and a minister at hand to point out the straight and narrow path?"

"I'll tell you what, good woman," returned the corporal, gently pushing her away; "I've no notion of my back being a highway for any man to walk to heaven upon. A pretty figure I should make at the pickets, for disobeying orders. Just step down and ask Lieutenant Mason, and you may bring in the whole congregation. We have not taken the guard from the foot-soldiers but an hour, and I shouldn't like to have it said that we know less of our duty than the militia."

"Admit the woman," said Dunwoodie, sternly, observing, for the first time, that one of his own corps was on post.

The corporal raised his hand to his cap, and fell back in silence; the soldier stood to his arms, and the matron entered.

"Here is a reverend gentleman below, come to soothe the parting soul, in the place of our own divine, who is engaged with an appointment that could not be put aside; 'tis to bury old Mr. —"

"Show him in," said Henry, with feverish impatience.

"But will the sentinel let him pass? I would not wish a friend of Mr. — to be rudely stopped on the threshold, and he a stranger."

All eyes were now turned on Dunwoodie, who, looking at his watch, spoke a few words with Henry, in an undertone, and hastened from the apartment, followed by Frances. The subject of their conversation was a wish expressed by the prisoner for a clergyman of his own persuasion, and a promise from the major that one should be sent from Fishkill town, through which he was about to pass on his way to the ferry to intercept the expected return of Harper. Mason soon made his bow at

the door, and willingly complied with the wishes of the landlady; and the divine was invited to make his appearance accordingly.

The person who was ushered into the apartment, preceded by Caesar, and followed by the matron, was a man beyond the middle age, or who might rather be said to approach the down-hill of life. In stature he was above the size of ordinary men, though his excessive leanness might contribute in deceiving as to his height; his countenance was sharp and unbending, and every muscle seemed set in rigid compression. No joy, or relaxation, appeared ever to have dwelt on features that frowned habitually, as if in detestation of the vices of mankind. The brows were beetling, dark, and forbidding, giving the promise of eyes of no less repelling expression; but the organs were concealed beneath a pair of enormous green goggles, through which they glared around with a fierceness that denounced the coming day of wrath. All was fanaticism, uncharitableness, and denunciation. Long, lank hair, a mixture of gray and black, fell down his neck, and in some degree obscured the sides of his face, and, parting on his forehead, fell in either direction in straight and formal screens. On the top of this ungraceful exhibition was laid, impending forward, so as to overhang in some measure the whole fabric, a large hat of three equal cocks. His coat was of a rusty black, and his breeches and stockings were of the same color; his shoes without luster, and half concealed beneath huge plated buckles.

He stalked into the room, and giving a stiff nod with his head, took the chair offered him by the black, in dignified silence. For several minutes no one broke this ominous pause in the conversation; Henry feeling a repugnance to his guest that he was vainly endeavoring to conquer, and the stranger himself drawing forth occasional sighs and groans, that threatened a dissolution of the unequal connection between his sublimated soul and its ungainly tenement. During this death-like preparation, Mr. Wharton, with a feeling nearly allied to that of his

son, led Sarah from the apartment. His retreat was noticed by the divine, in a kind of scornful disdain, who began to hum the air of a popular psalm tune, giving it the full richness of the twang that distinguishes the Eastern* psalmody.

"Cæsar," said Miss Peyton, "hand the gentleman some refreshment; he must need it after his ride."

"My strength is not in the things of life," said the divine, speaking in a hollow, sepulchral voice. "Thrice have I this day held forth in my Master's service and fainted not; still it is prudent to help this frail tenement of clay, for, surely, 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.'"

Opening a pair of enormous jaws, he took a good measure of the proffered brandy, and suffered it to glide downward with that sort of facility with which man is prone to sin.

"I apprehend, then, sir, that fatigue will disable you from performing the duties which kindness had induced you to attempt."

"Woman!" exclaimed the stranger, with energy, "when was I ever known to shrink from a duty? But 'judge not, lest ye be judged,' and fancy not that it is given to mortal eyes to fathom the intentions of the Deity."

"Nay," returned the maiden, meekly, and slightly disgusted with his jargon. "I pretend not to judge of either events, or the intentions of my fellow-creatures, much less of those of Omnipotence."

"'Tis well, woman—'tis well," cried the minister, waving his hand with supercilious disdain; "humility becometh thy sex, and lost condition; thy weakness driveth thee on headlong, like 'unto the bosom of destruction.'"

Surprised at this extraordinary deportment, yielding to that habit which urges us to speak reverently on sacred subjects, even when perhaps we had better continue silent, Miss Peyton replied:

"There is a power above that can and will sustain us all in well-doing, if we seek its support in humility and truth."

The stranger turned a lowering look at the speaker, and then, composing himself into an air of self-abasement, he continued, in the same repelling tones:

"It is not every one that crieth out for mercy that will be heard. The ways of Providence are not to be judged by men—'many are called, but few chosen.' It is easier to talk of humility than to feel it. Are you so humble, vile worm, as to wish to glorify God by your own damnation? If not, away with you for a publican and a pharisee!"

Such gross fanaticism was uncommon in America, and Miss Peyton began to imbibe the impression that her guest was deranged; but remembering that he had been sent by a well-known divine, and one of reputation, she discarded the idea, and, with some forbearance, observed:

"I may deceive myself in believing that mercy is proffered to all, but it is so soothing a doctrine that I would not willingly be undeceived."

"Mercy is only for the elect," cried the stranger, with an unaccountable energy; "and you are in the 'valley of the shadow of death.' Are you not a follower of idle ceremonies, which belong to the vain church that our tyrants would gladly establish here, along with their stamp-acts and tea-laws? Answer me that, woman; and remember that Heaven hears your answer; are you not of that idolatrous communion?"

"I worship at the altars of my fathers," said Miss Peyton, motioning to Henry for silence; "but bow to no other idol than my own infirmities."

"Yes, yes, I know **ye**, self-righteous and papal as ye are—followers of forms, and listeners to bookish preaching; think you, woman, that holy Paul had notes in his hand to propound **the** word to the believers?"

"My presence disturbs you," said Miss Peyton, rising; "I will leave you with my nephew, and offer those prayers in private that I did wish to mingle with his."

So saying, she withdrew, followed by the landlady, who was not a little shocked, and somewhat surprised, by the inter-

* By "Eastern" is meant the States of New England, which, being originally settled by Puritans, still retain many distinct shades of character.

perate zeal of her new acquaintance; for, although the good woman believed that Miss Peyton and her whole church were on the high road to destruction, she was by no means accustomed to hear such offensive and open avowals of their fate.

Henry had with difficulty repressed the indignation excited by this unprovoked attack on his meek and unresisting aunt; but as the door closed on her retiring figure, he gave way to his feelings.

"I must confess, sir," he exclaimed, with heat, "that in receiving a minister of God I thought I was admitting a Christian, and one who, by feeling his own weaknesses, knew how to pity the frailties of others. You have wounded the meek spirit of an excellent woman, and I acknowledge but little inclination to mingle in prayer with so intolerant a spirit."

The minister stood erect, with grave composure, following with his eyes, in a kind of scornful pity, the retiring females; and suffered the expostulation of the youth to be given as if unworthy of his notice. A third voice, however, spoke:

"Such a denunciation would have driven many women into fits; but it has answered the purpose well enough, as it is."

"Who's that?" cried the prisoner, in amazement, gazing around the room in quest of the speaker:

"It is I, Captain Wharton," said Harvey Birch, removing the spectacles, and exhibiting his piercing eyes, shining under a pair of false eyebrows.

"Good Heaven's—Harvey!"

"Silence!" said the peddler, solemnly; "'tis a name not to be mentioned, and least of all here, within the heart of the American army." Birch paused and gazed around him for a moment, with an emotion exceeding the base passion of fear, and then continued, in a gloomy tone, "There are a thousand halts in that very name, and little hope would there be left me of another escape should I be again taken. This is a fearful venture that I am making; but I could not sleep in quiet, and know that an innocent man was about to die the death of a dog, when I might save him."

"No," said Henry, with a glow of generous feeling on his cheek; "if the risk to yourself be so heavy, retire as you came, and leave me to my fate. Dunwoodie is making, even now, powerful exertions in my behalf; and if he meets with Mr. Harper in the course of the night, my liberation is certain."

"Harper!" echoed the peddler, remaining with his hands raised, in the act of replacing the spectacles; "what do you know of Harper? and why do you think he will do you service?"

"I have his promise;—you remember our recent meeting in my father's dwelling, and he then gave an unasked promise to assist me."

"Yes—but do you know him? that is—why do you think he has the power? or what reason have you for believing he will remember his word?"

"If there ever was a stamp of truth, or simple, honest benevolence, in the countenance of man, it shone in his," said Henry; "besides, Dunwoodie has powerful friends in the rebel army, and it would be better that I take the chance where I am than thus to expose you to certain death, if detected."

"Captain Wharton," said Birch, looking guardedly around, and speaking with impressive seriousness of manner, "if I fail you, all fail you. No Harper nor Dunwoodie can save your life; unless you get out with me, and that within the hour, you die to-morrow on the gallows of a murderer. Yes, such are their laws; the man who fights, and kills, and plunders, is honored; but he who serves his country as a spy, no matter how faithfully, no matter how honestly, lives to be reviled, or dies like the vilest criminal."

"You forget, Mr. Birch," said the youth, a little indignantly, "that I am not a treacherous, lurking spy, who deceives to betray; but innocent of the charge imputed to me."

The blood rushed over the pale, meager features of the peddler, until his face was one glow of fire; but it passed quickly away, and he replied:

"I have told you truth. Cæsar met me, as he was going on his errand this

morning, and with him I have laid the plan, which, if executed as I wish, will save you—otherwise you are lost; and I again tell you, that no other power on earth, not even Washington, can save you."

"I submit," said the prisoner, yielding to his earnest manner, and goaded by the fears that were thus awakened anew.

The peddler beckoned him to be silent and, walking to the door, opened it with the stiff, formal air with which he had entered the apartment.

"Friend, let no one enter," he said to the sentinel; "we are about to go to prayer, and would wish to be alone."

"I don't know that any will wish to interrupt you," returned the soldier, with a waggish leer of his eye; "but, should they be so disposed, I have no power to stop them, if they be of the prisoner's friends; I have my orders, and must mind them, whether the Englishman goes to heaven or not."

"Audacious sinner!" said the pretended priest, "have you not the fear of God before your eyes? I tell you, as you will dread punishment at the last day, to let none of the idolatrous communion enter, to mingle in the prayers of the righteous."

"Whew—ew—ew—what a noble commander you'd make for Sergeant Hollister! you'd preach him dumb in a roll-call. Hark'ee, I'll thank you not to make such a noise when you hold forth as to drown our buglers, or you may get a poor fellow a short horn at his grog, for not turning out to evening parade; if you want to be alone, have you no knife to stick over the door-latch, that you must have a troop of horse to guard your meeting-house?"

The peddler took the hint, and closed the door immediately, using the precaution suggested by the dragoon.

"You overact your part," said young Wharton, in constant apprehension of discovery; "your zeal is too intemperate."

"For a foot-soldier and them Eastern militia it might be," said Harvey, turning a bag upside down that Cæsar now handed him; "but these dragoons are fellows that you must brag down. A faint heart,

Captain Wharton, would do but little here; but come, here is a black shroud for your good-looking countenance," taking at the same time a parchment mask and fitting it to the face of Henry. "The master and the man must change places for a season."

"I don't tink he look a bit like me," said Cæsar, with disgust, as he surveyed his young master with his new complexion.

"Stop a minute, Cæsar," said the peddler, with the lurking drollery that at times formed part of his manner, "till we get on the wool."

"He worse than ebber now," cried the discontented African. "A think colored man like a sheep. I nebber see such a lip, Harvey; he most as big as a sausage!"

Great pains had been taken in forming the different articles used in the disguise of Captain Wharton, and when arranged, under the skillful superintendence of the peddler, they formed together a transformation that would easily escape detection from any but an extraordinary observer.

The mask was stuffed and shaped in such a manner as to preserve the peculiarities, as well as the color, of the African visage; and the wig was so artfully formed of black and white wool as to imitate the pepper-and-salt color of Cæsar's own head, and to exact plaudits from the black himself, who thought it an excellent counterfeit in everything but quality.

"There is but one man in the American army who could detect you, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, surveying his work with satisfaction, "and he is just now out of our way."

"And who is he?"

"The man who made you a prisoner. He would see your white skin through a plank. But strip, both of you; your clothes must be exchanged from head to foot."

Cæsar, who had received minute instructions from the peddler in their morning interview, immediately commenced throwing aside his coarse garments, which the youth took up and prepared to invest himself with; unable, however, to repress a few signs of loathing.

In the manner of the peddler there was an odd mixture of care and humor; the former was the result of a perfect knowledge of their danger, and the means necessary to be used in avoiding it; and the latter proceeded from the unavoidably ludicrous circumstances before him, acting on an indifference which sprang from habit and long familiarity with such scenes as the present.

"Here, captain," he said, taking up some loose wool, and beginning to stuff the stockings of Cæsar, which were already on the leg of the prisoner; "some judgment is necessary in shaping this limb. You will have to display it on horseback; and the Southern dragoons are so used to the brittle-shins that, should they notice your well-turned calf, they'd know at once that it never belonged to a black."

"Golly!" said Cæsar, with a chuckle that exhibited a mouth open from ear to ear, "Massy Harry breeches fit."

"Anything but your leg," said the peddler, coolly pursuing the toilet of Henry. "Slip on the coat, captain, over all. Upon my word, you would pass well at a pinkster frolic; and here, Cæsar, place this powdered wig over your curls, and be careful and look out of the window whenever the door is opened, and on no account speak, or you will betray all."

"I s'pose Harvey tink a color'd man an't got a tongue like oder folk," grumbled the black, as he took the station assigned to him.

Everything now was arranged for action, and the peddler very deliberately went over the whole of his injunctions to the two actors in the scene. The captain he conjured to dispense with his erect military carriage, and for a season to adopt the humble paces of his father's negro; and Cæsar he enjoined to silence and disguise, so long as he could possibly maintain them. Thus prepared, he opened the door and called aloud to the sentinel, who had retired to the farthest end of the passage, in order to avoid receiving any of that spiritual comfort which he felt was the sole property of another.

"Let the woman of the house be

called," said Harvey, in the solemn key of his assumed character; "and let her come alone. The prisoner is in a happy train of meditation, and must not be led from his devotions."

Cæsar sank his face between his hands, and when the soldier looked into the apartment he thought he saw his charge in deep abstraction. Casting a glance of huge contempt at the divine, he called aloud for the good woman of the house. She hastened to the summons, with earnest zeal, entertaining a secret hope that she was to be admitted to the gossip of a death-bed repentance.

"Sister," said the minister, in the authoritative tones of a master, "have you in the house 'The Christian Criminal's Last Moments, or Thoughts on Eternity, for Them who Die a Violent Death?'"

"I never heard of the book!" said the matron, in astonishment.

"'Tis not unlikely; there are many books you have never heard of; it is impossible for this poor penitent to pass in peace without the consolations of that volume. One hour's reading in it is worth an age of man's preaching."

"Bless me, what a treasure to possess!—when was it put out?"

"It was first put out at Geneva, in the Greek language, and then translated at Boston. It is a book, woman, that should be in the hands of every Christian, especially such as die upon the gallows. Have a horse prepared instantly for this black, who shall accompany me to my Brother—, and I will send down the volume yet in season. Brother, compose thy mind; you are now in the narrow path to glory."

Cæsar wriggled a little in his chair, but he had sufficient recollection to conceal his face with hands that were, in their turn, concealed by gloves. The landlady departed to comply with this very reasonable request, and the group of conspirators were again left to themselves.

"This is well," said the peddler; "but the difficult task is to deceive the officer who commands the guard—he is lieutenant to Lawton, and has learned some of the captain's own cunning in these things.

Remember, Captain Wharton," continued he, with an air of pride, "that now is the moment when everything depends on our coolness."

"My fate can be made but little worse than it is at present, my worthy fellow," said Henry; "but for your sake I will do all that in me lies."

"And wherein can I be more forlorn and persecuted than I now am?" asked the peddler, with that wild incoherence which often crossed his manner. "But I have promised *one* to save you, and to him I never have yet broken my word."

"And who is he?" said Henry, with awakened interest.

"No one."

The man soon returned, and announced that the horses were at the door. Harvey gave the captain a glance, and led the way down the stairs, first desiring the woman to leave the prisoner to himself, in order that he might digest the wholesome mental food that he had so lately received.

A rumor of the odd character of the priest had spread from the sentinel at the door to his comrades; so that when Harvey and Wharton reached the open space before the building, they found a dozen idle dragoons loitering about, with the wagish intention of quizzing the fanatic, and employed in affected admiration of the steeds.

"A fine horse!" said the leader in this plan of mischief; "but a little low in flesh; I suppose from hard labor in your calling."

"My calling may be laborious to both myself and this faithful beast, but then a day of settling is at hand, that will reward me for all my outgoings and incomings," said Birch, putting his foot in the stirrup and preparing to mount.

"You work for pay, then, as we fight for't?" cried another of the party.

"Even so—is not the laborer worthy of his hire?"

"Come, suppose you give us a little preaching; we have a leisure moment just now, and there's no telling how much good you might do a set of reprobates like us, in a few words; here, mount this horse-

block, and take your text where you please."

The men now gathered in eager delight around the peddler, who, glancing his eye expressively toward the captain, who had been suffered to mount, replied:

"Doubtless, for such is my duty. But, Cæsar, you can ride up the road and deliver the note—the unhappy prisoner will be wanting the book, for his hours are numbered."

"Ay—ay, go along, Cæsar, and get the book," shouted half a dozen voices, all crowding eagerly around the ideal priest, in anticipation of a frolic.

The peddler inwardly dreaded that, in their unceremonious handling of himself and garments, his hat and wig might be displaced, when detection would be certain; he was therefore fain to comply with their request. Ascending the horse-block, after hemming once or twice, and casting several glances at the captain, who continued immovable, he commenced as follows:

"I shall call your attention, my brethren, to that portion of Scripture which you will find in the second book of Samuel, and which is written in the following words:—*'And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.'* Cæsar, ride forward, I say, and obtain the book as directed; thy master is groaning in spirit even now for the want of it."

"An excellent text!" cried the dragoons. "Go on—go on—let the snowball stay; he wants to be edified as well as another."

"What are you at there, scoundrels?" cried Lieutenant Mason, as he came in sight from a walk he had taken, to sneer at the evening parade of the regiment of militia; "away with every man of you to your quarters, and let me find that each horse is cleaned and littered when I come round." The sound of the officer's voice operated like a charm, and no priest could desire a more silent congregation, although he might possibly have wished

for one that was more numerous. Mason had not done speaking, when it was reduced to the image of Cæsar only. The peddler took that opportunity to mount, but he had to preserve the gravity of his movements; for the remark of the troopers upon the condition of their beasts was but too just, and a dozen dragoon horses stood saddled and bridled at hand, ready to receive their riders at a moment's warning.

"Well, have you bitted the poor fellow within," said Mason, "that he can take his last ride under the curb of divinity, old gentleman?"

"There is evil in thy conversation, profane man," cried the priest, raising his hands and casting his eyes upward in holy horror; "so I will depart from thee unhurt, as Daniel was liberated from the lion's den."

"Off with you, for a hypocritical, psalm-singing, canting rogue in disguise," said Mason, scornfully; "by the life of Washington! it worries an honest fellow to see such voracious beasts of prey ravaging a country for which he sheds his blood. If I had you on a Virginia plantation for a quarter of an hour, I'd teach you to worm the tobacco with the turkeys."

"I leave you, and shake the dust off my shoes, that no remnant of this wicked hole may tarnish the vestments of the godly."

"Start, or I will shake the dust from your jacket, designing knave! A fellow to be preaching to my men! There's Hollister put the devil in them by his exhorting; the rascals were getting too conscientious to strike a blow that would raise the skin. But hold! whither do you travel, master blackey, in such godly company?"

"He goes," said the minister, hastily speaking for his companion, "to return with a book of much condolence and virtue to the sinful youth above, whose soul will speedily become white, even as his outwards are black and unseemly. Would you deprive a dying man of the consolation of religion?"

"No, no, poor fellow, his fate is bad enough; a famous good breakfast his prim

body of an aunt gave us. But harkee, Mr. Revelations, if the youth must die *secundum artem*, let it be under a gentleman's direction; and my advice is, that you never trust that skeleton of yours among us again, or I will take the skin off and leave you naked."

"Out upon thee for a reviler and scoffer of goodness!" said Birch, moving slowly, and with a due observance of clerical dignity, down the road, followed by the imaginary Cæsar; "but I leave thee, and that behind me that will prove thy condemnation, and take from thee a hearty and joyful deliverance."

"Damn him," muttered the trooper; "the fellow rides like a stake, and his legs stick out like the cocks of his hat. I wish I had him below these hills, where the law is not over-particular, I'd——"

"Corporal of the guard!—corporal of the guard!" shouted the sentinel in the passage to the chambers; "corporal of the guard!—corporal of the guard!"

The subaltern flew up the narrow stairway that led to the room of the prisoner, and demanded the meaning of the outcry.

The soldier was standing at the open door of the apartment, looking in with a suspicious eye on the supposed British officer. On observing his lieutenant, he fell back with habitual respect, and replied, with an air of puzzled thought:

"I don't know, sir; but just now the prisoner looked queer. Ever since the preacher has left him he don't look as he used to do—but," gazing intently over the shoulder of his officer, "it must be him, too! There is the same powdered head, and the darn in the coat, where he was hit the day he had the last brush with the enemy."

"And then all this noise is occasioned by your doubting whether that poor gentleman is your prisoner or not, is it, sirrah? Who the devil do you think it can be else?"

"I don't know who else it can be," returned the fellow, sullenly; "but he is grown thicker and shorter, if it is he; and see for yourself, sir, he shakes all over, like a man in an ague."

This was but too true. Cæsar was an alarmed auditor of this short conversation, and, from congratulating himself upon the dexterous escape of his young master, his thoughts were very naturally beginning to dwell upon the probable consequences to his own person. The pause that succeeded the last remark of the sentinel in no degree contributed to the restoration of his faculties. Lieutenant Mason was busied in examining with his own eyes the suspected person of the black, and Cæsar was aware of the fact, by stealing a look through a passage under one of his arms that he had left expressly for the purpose of reconnoitering. Captain Lawton would have discovered the fraud immediately, but Mason was by no means so quick-sighted as his commander. He therefore turned rather contemptuously to the soldier and, speaking in an undertone, observed :

"That anabaptist, methodistical, quaker, psalm-singing rascal has frightened the boy with his farrago about flames and brimstone. I'll step in and cheer him with a little rational conversation."

"I have heard of fear making a man white," said the soldier, drawing back, and staring as if his eyes would start from their sockets, "but it has changed the royal captain to a black!"

The truth was that Cæsar, unable to hear what Mason uttered in a low voice, and having every fear aroused in him by what had already passed, incautiously removed the wig a little from one of his ears in order to hear the better, without in the least remembering that its color might prove fatal to his disguise. The sentinel had kept his eyes fastened on his prisoner, and noticed the action. The attention of Mason was instantly drawn to the same object; and, forgetting all delicacy for a brother officer in distress, or, in short, forgetting everything but the censure that might alight on his corps, the lieutenant sprang forward and seized the terrified African by the throat; for no sooner had Cæsar heard his color named, than he knew his discovery was certain; and at the first sound of Mason's heavy boot on the floor he arose from his seat, and retreated pre-

cipitately to the farthest corner of the room.

"Who are you?" cried Mason, dashing the head of the old man against the angle of the wall at each interrogatory; "who the devil are you, and where is the Englishman? Speak, thou thunder-cloud! Answer me, you jackdaw, or I'll hang you on the gallows of the spy!"

Cæsar continued firm. Neither the threats nor the blows could extract any reply, until the lieutenant, by a very natural transition in the attack, sent his heavy boot forward in a direction that brought it in direct contact with the most sensitive part of the negro—his shin. The most obdurate heart could not have exacted further patience, and Cæsar instantly gave in. The first words he spoke were :

"Golly! Massa, you tink I got no feelin'?"

"By heavens!" shouted the lieutenant, "it is the negro himself! Scoundrell! where is your master, and who was the priest?" While speaking, he made a movement as if about to renew the attack; but Cæsar cried aloud for mercy, promising to tell all that he knew.

"Who was the priest?" repeated the dragoon, drawing back his formidable leg, and holding it in threatening suspense.

"Harvey, Harvey!" cried Cæsar, dancing from one leg to the other, as he thought each member in turn might be assailed.

"Harvey who, you black villain?" cried the impatient lieutenant, as he executed a full measure of vengeance by letting his leg fly.

"Birch!" shrieked Cæsar, falling on his knees, the tears rolling in large drops over his shining face.

"Harvey Birch!" echoed the trooper, hurling the black from him and rushing from the room. "To arms! to arms! Fifty guineas for the life of the peddler-spy—give no quarter to either. Mount! mount! to arms! to horse!"

During the uproar occasioned by the assembling of the dragoons, who all rushed tumultuously to their horses, Cæsar rose

from the floor, where he had been thrown by Mason, and began to examine into his injuries. Happily for himself, he had alighted on his head, and consequently sustained no material damage.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Away went Gilpin, neck or nought,
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig."—COWPER.

THE road which it was necessary for the peddler and the English captain to travel, in order to reach the shelter of the hills, lay for a half-mile in full view from the door of the building that had so recently been the prison of the latter; running for the whole distance over the rich plain that spreads to the very foot of the mountains, which here rise in a nearly perpendicular ascent from their bases; it then turned short to the right, and was obliged to follow the windings of nature, as it won its way into the bosom of the Highlands.

To preserve the supposed difference in their stations, Harvey rode a short distance ahead of his companion, and maintained the sober, dignified pace that was suited to his assumed character. On their right, the regiment of foot that we have already mentioned lay in tents; and the sentinels who guarded their encampment were to be seen moving with measured tread under the skirts of the hills themselves.

The first impulse of Henry was, certainly, to urge the beast he rode to his greatest speed at once, and by a coup-de-main not only accomplish his escape, but relieve himself from the torturing suspense of his situation. But the forward movement that the youth made for this purpose was instantly checked by the peddler.

"Hold up!" he cried, dexterously reining his own horse across the path of the other; "would you ruin us both? Fall into the place of a black, following his master. Did you not see their blooded chargers, all saddled and bridled, standing in the sun before the house? How

long do you think that miserable Dutch horse you are on would hold his speed, if pursued by the Virginians? Every foot that we can gain, without giving the alarm, counts a day in our lives. Ride steadily after me, and on no account look back. They are as subtle as foxes, ay, and as ravenous for blood as wolves!"

Henry reluctantly restrained his impatience, and followed the direction of the peddler. His imagination, however, continually alarmed him with the fancied sounds of pursuit; though Birch, who occasionally looked back under the pretense of addressing his companion, assured him that all continued quiet and peaceful.

"But," said Henry, "it will not be possible for Cæsar to remain long undiscovered. Had we not better put our horses to the gallop, and by the time they can reflect on the cause of our flight, we can reach the corner of the woods?"

"Ah! you little know them, Captain Wharton," returned the peddler; "there is a sergeant at this moment looking after us, as if he thought all was not right; the keen-eyed fellow watches me like a tiger lying in wait for his leap. When I stood on the horse-block, he half suspected that something was wrong. Nay, check your beast—we must let the animals walk a little, for he is laying his hand on the pommel of his saddle. If he mounts we are gone. The foot-soldiers could reach us now with their muskets."

"What does he now?" asked Henry, reining his horse to a walk, but at the same time pressing his heels into the animal's sides, to be in readiness for a spring.

"He turns from his charger, and looks the other way; now trot on gently—not so fast—not so fast. Observe the sentinel in the field, a little ahead of us—he eyes us keenly."

"Never mind the foot-man," said Henry, impatiently; "he can do nothing but shoot us, whereas these dragoons may make me a captive again. Surely, Harvey, there are horses moving down the road behind us. Do you see nothing particular?"

"Humph!" ejaculated the peddler; "there is something particular, indeed,

to be seen behind the thicket on our left. Turn your head a little, and you may see and profit by it too."

Henry eagerly seized this permission to look aside, and the blood curdled to his heart as he observed that they were passing a gallows, which unquestionably had been erected for his own execution. He turned his face from the sight in undisguised horror.

"There is a warning to be prudent," said the peddler, in the sententious manner that he often adopted.

"It is a terrific sight, indeed!" cried Henry, for a moment veiling his eyes with his hand, as if to drive a vision from before him.

The peddler moved his body partly around, and spoke with energetic but gloomy bitterness—"And yet, Captain Wharton, you see it where the setting sun shines full upon you; the air you breathe is clear, and fresh from the hills before you. Every step that you take leaves that hated gallows behind; and every dark hollow, and every shapeless rock in the mountains, offers you a hiding-place from the vengeance of your enemies. But I have seen the gibbet raised when no place of refuge offered. Twice have I been buried in dungeons, where, fettered and in chains, I have passed nights in torture, looking forward to the morning's dawn that was to light me to a death of infamy. The sweat has started from limbs that seemed already drained of their moisture; and if I ventured to the hole that admitted air through grates of iron to look out upon the smiles of nature, which God has bestowed for the meanest of his creatures, the gibbet has glared before my eyes, like an evil conscience harrowing the soul of a dying man. Four times have I been in their power, besides this last; but—twice—did I think my hour had come. It is hard to die at the best, Captain Wharton; but to spend your last moments alone and unpitied, to know that none near you so much as think of the fate that is to you the closing of all that is earthly; to think that in a few hours you are to be led from the gloom which, as you dwell on what

follows, becomes dear to you, to the face of day, and there to meet all eyes fixed upon you, as if you were a wild beast; and to lose sight of everything amid the jeers and scoffs of your fellow-creatures—that, Captain Wharton, that indeed is to die!"

Henry listened in amazement, as his companion uttered this speech with a vehemence altogether new to him; both seemed to have forgotten their danger and their disguises.

"What! were you ever so near death as that?"

"Have I not been the hunted beast of these hills for three years past?" resumed Harvey; "and once they even led me to the foot of the gallows itself, and I escaped only by an alarm from the royal troops. Had they been a quarter of an hour later I must have died. There was I placed in the midst of unfeeling men, and gaping women and children, as a monster to be cursed. When I would pray to God, my ears were insulted with the history of my crimes; and when, in all that multitude, I looked around for a single face that showed me any pity, I could find none—no, not even one; all cursed me as a wretch who would sell his country for gold. The sun was brighter to my eyes than common—but it was the last time I should see it. The fields were gay and pleasant, and everything seemed as if this world was a kind of heaven. Oh! how sweet life was to me at that moment! 'Twas a dreadful hour, Captain Wharton, and such as you have never known. You have friends to feel for you, but I had none but a father to mourn my loss, when he might hear of it; but there was no pity, no consolation near, to soothe my anguish. Everything seemed to have deserted me. I even thought that HE had forgotten that I lived."

"What! did you feel that God himself had forsaken you, Harvey?"

"God never forsakes his servants," returned Birch, with reverence, and exhibiting naturally a devotion that hitherto he had only assumed.

"And who did you mean by HE?"

The peddler raised himself in his saddle

to the stiff and upright posture that was suited to his outward appearance. The look of fire, that for a short time glowed on his countenance, disappeared in the solemn lines of unbending self-abasement, and, speaking as if addressing a negro, he replied :

"In heaven there is no distinction of color, my brother ; therefore you have a precious charge within you, that you must hereafter render an account of ;" dropping his voice—"this is the last sentinel near the road ; look not back, as you value your life."

Henry remembered his situation, and instantly assumed the humble demeanor of his adopted character. The unaccountable energy of the peddler's manner was soon forgotten in the sense of his own immediate danger ; and with the recollection of his critical situation, returned all the uneasiness that he had momentarily forgotten.

"What see you, Harvey ?" he cried, observing the peddler to gaze toward the building they had left with ominous interest ; "what see you at the house ?"

"That which bodes no good to us," returned the pretended priest. "Throw aside the mask and wig ; you will need all your senses without much delay ; throw them in the road. There are none before us that I dread, but there are those behind who will give us a fearful chase."

"Nay, then," cried the captain, casting the implements of his disguise into the highway, "let us improve our time to the utmost. We want a full quarter to the turn, why not push for it at once ?"

"Be cool ; they are in alarm, but they will not mount without an officer, unless they see us fly—now he comes, he moves to the stables ; trot briskly ; a dozen are in their saddles, but the officer stops to tighten his girths ; they hope to steal a march upon us ; he is mounted ; now ride, Captain Wharton, for your life, and keep at my heels. If you quit me, you will be lost !"

A second request was unnecessary. The instant that Harvey put his horse to his speed, Captain Wharton was at his heels, urging the miserable animal he rode to the

utmost. Birch had selected his own beast ; and although vastly inferior to the high-fed and blooded chargers of the dragoons, still it was much superior to the little pony that had been thought good enough to carry Caesar Thompson on an errand. A very few jumps convinced the captain that his companion was fast leaving him, and a fearful glance thrown behind him informed the fugitive that his enemies were as speedily approaching. With that abandonment that makes misery doubly grievous, when it is to be supported alone, Henry cried aloud to the peddler not to desert him. Harvey instantly drew up, and suffered his companion to run alongside of his own horse. The cocked hat and wig of the peddler fell from his head the moment that his steed began to move briskly, and this development of their disguise, as it might be termed, was witnessed by the dragoons, who announced their observation by a boisterous shout, that seemed to be uttered in the very ears of the fugitives, so loud was the cry, and so short the distance between them.

"Had we not better leave our horses ?" said Henry, "and make for the hills across the fields, on our left ?—the fence will stop our pursuers."

"That way lies the gallows," returned the peddler ; "these fellows go three feet to our two, and would mind the fences no more than we do these ruts ; but it is a short quarter to the turn, and there are two roads behind the wood. They may stand to choose until they can take the track, and we shall gain a little upon them there."

"But this miserable horse is blown already," cried Henry, urging his beast with the end of his bridle, at the same time that Harvey aided his efforts by applying the lash of a heavy riding-whip he carried ; "he will never stand it for half a mile farther."

"A quarter will do ; a quarter will do," said the peddler ; "a single quarter will save us, if you follow my directions."

Somewhat cheered by the cool and confident manner of his companion, Henry continued silently urging his horse forward. A few moments brought them to

the desired turn, and as they doubled round a point of low under-bush, the fugitives caught a glimpse of their pursuers scattered along the highway. Mason and the sergeant, being better mounted than the rest of the party, were much nearer to their heels than even the peddler thought could be possible.

At the foot of the hills, and for some distance up the dark valley that wound among the mountains, a thick underwood of saplings had been suffered to shoot up, where the heavier growth was felled for the sake of the fuel. At the sight of this cover Henry again urged the peddler to dismount, and to plunge into the woods; but his request was promptly refused. The two roads before mentioned met at a very sharp angle, at a short distance from the turn, and both were circuitous, so that but little of either could be seen at a time. The peddler took the one which led to the left, but held it only a moment; for, on reaching a partial opening in the thicket, he darted across into the right-hand path, and led the way up the steep ascent which lay directly before them. This maneuver saved them. On reaching the fork, the dragoons followed the track, and passed the spot where the fugitives had crossed to the other road, before they missed the marks of the footsteps. Their loud cries were heard by Henry and the peddler, as their wearied and breathless animals toiled up the hill, ordering their comrades in the rear to ride in the right direction.

The captain again proposed to leave their horses, and dash into the thicket.

"Not yet, not yet," said Birch, in a low voice; "the road falls from the top of this hill as steep as it rises; first let us gain the top." While speaking they reached the desired summit, and both threw themselves from their horses, Henry plunging into the thick underwood which covered the side of the mountain for some distance above them. Harvey stopped to give each of their beasts a few severe blows of his whip, then drove them headlong down the path on the other side of the eminence, and then followed his example.

The peddler entered the thicket with a little caution, and avoided, as much as

possible, rustling or breaking the branches in his way.

There was but time only to shelter his person from view, when a dragoon led up the ascent; and on reaching the height, he cried aloud: "I saw one of their horses turning the hill this minute."

"Drive on; spur forward, my lads," shouted Mason; "give the Englishman quarter, but cut down the peddler, and make an end of him."

Henry felt his companion gripe his arm hard, as he listened in a great tremor to this cry, which was followed by the passage of a dozen horsemen, with a vigor and speed that showed too plainly how little security their over-tired steeds could have afforded them.

"Now," said the peddler, rising from the cover to reconnoiter, and standing for a moment in suspense, "all that we gain is clear gain; for as we go up, they go down. Let us be stirring."

"But will they not follow us, and surround this mountain?" said Henry, rising, and imitating the labored but rapid progress of his companion; "remember, they have foot as well as horse, and at any rate, we shall starve in the hills."

"Fear nothing, Captain Wharton," returned the peddler, with confidence; "this is not the mountain that I would be on, but necessity has made me a dexterous pilot among these hills. I will lead you where no man will dare to follow. See, the sun is already setting behind the tops of the western mountains, and it will be two hours to the rising of the moon. Who, think you, will follow us far, on a November night, among these rocks and precipices?"

"Listen!" exclaimed Henry; "the dragoons are shouting to each other; they miss us already."

"Come to the point of this rock, and you may see them," said Harvey, composedly seating himself down to rest. "Nay, they can see us—observe, they are pointing up with their fingers. There, one has fired his pistol, but the distance is too great even for a musket."

"They will pursue us," cried the impatient Henry; "let us be moving."

"They will not think of such a thing," returned the peddler, picking the checkerberries that grew on the thin soil where he sat, and very deliberately chewing them, leaves and all, to refresh his mouth. "What progress could they make here, in their heavy boots and spurs, and long swords? No, no—they may go back and turn out the foot, but the horse pass through these defiles, when they can keep the saddle, with fears and trembling. Come, follow me, Captain Wharton; we have a troublesome march before us, but I will bring you where none will think of venturing this night."

So saying, they both arose, and were soon hid from view among the rocks and caverns of the mountain.

The conjecture of the peddler was true; Mason and his men dashed down the hill in pursuit, as they supposed, of their victims, but on reaching the bottom lands they found only the deserted horses of the fugitives. Some little time was spent in examining the woods near them, and in endeavoring to take the trail on such ground as might enable the horses to pursue, when one of the party descried the peddler and Henry seated on the rock already mentioned.

"He's off," muttered Mason, eyeing Harvey with fury; "he's off, and we are disgraced. By heavens, Washington will not trust us with the keeping of a suspected Tory, if we let the rascal trifle in this manner with the corps; and there sits the Englishman, too, looking down upon us with a smile of benevolence! I fancy that I can see it. Well, well, my lad, you are comfortably seated, I will confess, and that is something better than dancing upon nothing; but you are not to the west of the Harlem River yet, and I'll try your wind before you tell Sir Henry what you have seen, or I'm no soldier."

"Shall I fire, and frighten the peddler?" asked one of the men, drawing his pistol from the holster.

"Ay—startle the birds from their perch—let us see how they can use the wing." The man fired the pistol, and Mason continued—"Fore George, I believe the scoundrels laugh at us. But homeward,

or we shall have them rolling stones upon our heads, and the Royal Gazettes teeming with an account of a rebel regiment routed by two loyalists. They have told bigger lies than that before now."

The dragoons moved sullenly after their officer, who rode toward their quarters, musing on the course it behooved him to pursue in the present dilemma. It was twilight when Mason's party reached the dwelling, before the door of which were collected a great number of the officers and men, busily employed in giving and listening to the most exaggerated accounts of the escape of the spy. The mortified dragoons gave their ungrateful tidings with the sullen air of disappointed men; and most of the officers gathered around Mason to consult of the steps that ought to be taken. Miss Peyton and Frances were breathless and unobserved listeners to all that passed between them, from the window of the chamber immediately above their heads.

"Something must be done, and that speedily," observed the commanding officer of the regiment which lay encamped before the house; "this English officer is doubtless an instrument in the great blow aimed at us by the enemy lately; besides, our honor is involved in his escape."

"Let us beat the woods!" cried several, at once; "by morning we shall have them both again."

"Softly, softly, gentlemen," returned the colonel; "no man can travel these hills after dark, unless used to the passes. Nothing but horse can do service in this business, and I presume Lieutenant Mason hesitates to move without the orders of his major."

"I certainly dare not," replied the subaltern, gravely shaking his head, "unless you will take the responsibility of an order; but Major Dunwoodie will be back again in two hours, and we can carry the tidings through the hills before daylight; so that, by spreading patrols across from one river to the other, and offering a reward to the country people, their escape will yet be impossible, unless they can join the party that is said to be out on the Hudson."

"A very plausible plan," cried the colonel, "and one that must succeed; but let a messenger be dispatched to Dunwoodie, or he may continue at the ferry until it proves too late; though doubtless the runaways will lie in the mountains tonight."

To this suggestion Mason acquiesced, and a courier was sent to the major with the important intelligence of the escape of Henry, and an intimation of the necessity of his presence to conduct the pursuit. After this arrangement the officers separated.

When Miss Peyton and her niece first learned the escape of Captain Wharton, it was with difficulty they could credit their senses. They both relied so implicitly on the success of Dunwoodie's exertions, that they thought the act, on the part of their relative, extremely imprudent; but it was now too late to mend it. While listening to the conversation of the officers, both were struck with the increased danger of Henry's situation, if recaptured, and they trembled to think of the great exertions that would be made to accomplish this object. Miss Peyton consoled herself, and endeavored to cheer her niece, with the probability that the fugitives would pursue their course with unremitting diligence, so that they might reach the Neutral Ground before the horse would carry down the tidings of their flight. The absence of Dunwoodie seemed to her all-important, and the artless lady was anxiously devising some project that might detain her kinsman, and thus give her nephew the longest possible time. But very different were the reflections of Frances. She could no longer doubt that the figure she had seen on the hill was Birch, and she felt certain that, instead of flying to the friendly forces below, her brother would be taken to the mysterious hut to pass the night.

Frances and her aunt held a long and animated discussion by themselves, when the good spinster reluctantly yielded to the representation of her niece, and, folding her in her arms, she kissed her cold cheek, and fervently blessing her, allowed

her to depart on an errand of fraternal love.

CHAPTER XXX.

"And here, forlorn and lost, I tread,
With fainting steps, and slow;
Where wilds, immeasurably spread
Seem length'n'ing as I go."—GOLDSMITH.

THE night had set in dark and chilling, as Frances Wharton, with a beating heart but light step, moved through the little garden that lay behind the farm-house which had been her brother's prison, and took her way to the foot of the mountain, where she had seen the figure of him she supposed to be the peddler. It was still early, but the darkness and the dreary nature of a November evening would, at any other moment, or with less inducement to exertion, have driven her back in terror to the circle she had left. Without pausing to reflect, however, she flew over the ground with a rapidity that seemed to bid defiance to all impediments, nor stopped even to breathe, until she had gone half the distance to the rock that she had marked as the spot where Birch made his appearance on that very morning.

The good treatment of their women is the surest evidence that a people can give of their civilization; and there is no nation which has more to boast of, in this respect, than the Americans. Frances felt but little apprehension from the orderly and quiet troops who were taking their evening's repast on the side of the highway, opposite to the field through which she was flying. There were her countrymen, and she knew that her sex would be respected by the Eastern militia, who composed this body; but in the volatile and reckless character of the Southern horse she had less confidence. Outrages of any description were seldom committed by the really American soldiery; but she recoiled, with exquisite delicacy, from even the appearance of humiliation. When, therefore, she heard the footsteps of a horse moving slowly up the road, she shrank, timidly, into a little thicket of wood which grew around the spring that bubbled from the side of a hillock near her.

The vedette, for such it proved to be, passed her without noticing her form, which was so enveloped as to be as little conspicuous as possible, humming a low air to himself, and probably thinking of some other fair that he had left on the banks of the Potomac.

Frances listened anxiously to the retreating footsteps of his horse, and as they died upon her ear she ventured from her place of secrecy, and advanced a short distance into the field, where, startled at the gloom, and appalled with the dreariness of the prospect, she paused to reflect on what she had undertaken. Throwing back the hood of her cardinal, she sought the support of a tree, and gazed toward the summit of the mountain that was to be the goal of her enterprise. It rose from the plain like a huge pyramid, giving nothing to the eye but its outlines. The pinnacle could be faintly discerned in front of a lighter background of clouds, between which a few glimmering stars occasionally twinkled in momentary brightness, and then gradually became obscured by the passing vapor that was moving before the wind, at a vast distance below the clouds themselves. Should she return, Henry and the peddler would most probably pass the night in fancied security upon that very hill, toward which she was straining her eyes, in the vain hope of observing some light that might encourage her to proceed. The deliberate, and what to her seemed cold-blooded, project of the officer for the recapture of the fugitives, still rang in her ears, and stimulated her to go on; but the solitude into which she must venture, the time, the actual danger of the ascent, and the uncertainty of her finding the hut, or, what was still more disheartening, the chance that it might be occupied by unknown tenants, and those of the worst description, urged her to retreat.

The increasing darkness was each moment rendering objects less and less distinct, and the clouds were gathering more gloomily in the rear of the hill, until its form could no longer be discerned. Frances threw back her rich curls with both hands on her temples, in order to possess her senses in their utmost keenness; but

the towering hill was entirely lost to the eye. At length she discovered a faint and twinkling blaze in the direction in which she thought the building stood, that by its reviving and receding luster might be taken for the glimmering of a fire. But the delusion vanished as the horizon again cleared, and the star of evening shone forth from a cloud, after struggling hard, as if for existence. She now saw the mountain to the left of the place where the planet was shining, and suddenly a streak of mellow light burst upon the fantastic oaks that were thinly scattered over its summit, and gradually moved down its side, until the whole pile became distinct under the rays of the rising moon. Although it would have been physically impossible for our heroine to advance without the aid of the friendly light which now gleamed on the long line of level land before her, yet she was not encouraged to proceed. If she could see the goal of her wishes, she could also perceive the difficulties that must attend her reaching it.

While deliberating in distressing incertitude, now shrinking with the timidity of her sex and years from the enterprise, and now resolving to rescue her brother at every hazard, Frances turned her looks toward the east, in earnest gaze at the clouds which constantly threatened to involve her again in comparative darkness. Had an adder stung her, she could not have sprung with greater celerity than she recoiled from the object against which she was leaning, and which she, for the first time, noticed. The two upright posts, with a cross-beam on their tops, and a rude platform beneath, told but too plainly the nature of the structure; even the cord was suspended from an iron staple, and was swinging to and fro in the night air. Frances hesitated no longer, but rather flew than ran across the meadow, and was soon at the base of the rock, where she hoped to find something like a path to the summit of the mountain. Here she was compelled to pause for breath, and she improved the leisure by surveying the ground about her. The ascent was quite abrupt, but she found a sheep-path that wound among the shelv-

ing rocks and through the trees, so as to render her labor much less tiresome than it otherwise would have been. Throwing a fearful glance behind, the determined girl commenced her journey upward. Young, active, and impelled by her generous motive, she moved up the hill with elastic steps, and very soon emerged from the cover of the woods into an open space of more level ground, that had evidently been cleared of its timber for the purpose of cultivation. But either the war, or the sterility of the soil, had compelled the adventurer to abandon the advantages that he had obtained over the wilderness, and already the bushes and briers were springing up afresh, as if the plow had never traced its furrows through the mould which nourished them.

Frances felt her spirits invigorated by these faint vestiges of the labor of man, and she walked up the gentle acclivity with renewed hopes of success. The path now diverged in so many different directions that she soon saw it would be useless to follow their windings, and abandoning it at the first turn, she labored forward toward what she thought was the nearest point of the summit. The cleared ground was soon passed, and woods and rocks, clinging to the precipitous sides of the mountain, again opposed themselves to her progress. Occasionally, the path was to be seen running along the verge of the clearing, and then striking off into the scattering patches of grass and herbage, but in no instance could she trace it upward. Tufts of wood hanging to the briers sufficiently denoted the origin of these tracks, and Frances rightly conjectured that whoever descended the mountain would avail himself of their existence to lighten the labor. Seating herself on a stone, the wearied girl again paused to rest and to reflect; the clouds were rising before the moon, and the whole scene at her feet lay pictured in the softest colors.

The white tents of the militia were stretched in regular lines immediately beneath her. The light was shining in the window of her aunt, who, Frances easily fancied, was watching the mountain, racked with all the anxiety she might be

supposed to feel for her niece. Lanterns were playing about in the stable-yard, where she knew the horses of the dragoons were kept, and believing them to be preparing for their night march, she again sprang upon her feet and renewed her toil.

Our heroine had to ascend more than a quarter of a mile farther, although she had already conquered two-thirds of the height of the mountain. But she was now without a path or any guide to direct her in her course. Fortunately, the hill was conical, like most of the mountains in that range, and by advancing upward, she was certain of at length reaching the desired hut, which hung, as it were, on the very pinnacle. Nearly an hour did she struggle with the numerous difficulties that she was obliged to overcome, when, having been repeatedly exhausted with her efforts, and, in several instances, in great danger from falls, she succeeded in gaining the small piece of table-land on the summit.

Faint with her exertions, which had been unusually severe for so slight a frame, she sank on a rock to recover her strength and fortitude for the approaching interview. A few moments sufficed for this purpose, when she proceeded in quest of the hut. All of the neighboring hills were distinctly visible by the aid of the moon, and Frances was able, where she stood, to trace the route of the highway from the plains into the mountains. By following the line with her eyes, she soon discovered the point whence she had seen the mysterious dwelling, and directly opposite to that point she well knew the hut must stand.

The chilling air sighed through the leafless branches of the gnarled and crooked oaks, as, with a step so light as hardly to rustle the dry leaves on which she trod, Frances moved forward to that part of the hill where she expected to find this secluded habitation; but nothing could she discern that in the least resembled a dwelling of any sort. In vain she examined every recess of the rocks, or inquisitively explored every part of the summit that she thought could hold the tenement of the peddler. No hut, nor any

vestige of a human being, could she trace. The idea of her solitude struck on the terrified mind of the affrighted girl, and approaching to the edge of a shelving rock, she bent forward to gaze on the signs of life in the vale, when a ray of keen light dazzled her eyes, and a warm air diffused itself over her whole frame. Recovering from her surprise, Frances looked on the ledge beneath her, and at once perceived that she stood directly over the object of her search. A hole through its roof afforded a passage to the smoke, which, as it blew aside, showed her a clear and cheerful fire crackling and snapping on a rude hearth of stone. The approach to the front of the hut was by a winding path around the point of the rock on which she stood, and by this she advanced to its door.

Three sides of this singular edifice, if such it could be called, were composed of logs laid alternately on each other, to a little more than the height of a man; and the fourth was formed by the rock against which it leaned. The roof was made of the bark of trees, laid in long strips from the rock to its eaves; the fissures between the logs had been stuffed with clay, which in many places had fallen out, and dried leaves were made use of as a substitute to keep out the wind. A single window of four panes of glass was in front, but a board carefully closed it, in such a manner as to emit no light from the fire within. After pausing some time to view this singularly constructed hiding-place, for such Frances well knew it to be, she applied her eye to a crevice to examine the inside. There was no lamp or candle, but the blazing fire of dry wood made the interior of the hut light enough to read by. In one corner lay a bed of straw, with a pair of blankets thrown carelessly over it, as if left where they had last been used. Against the walls and rock were suspended, from pegs forced into the crevices, various garments, and such as were apparently fitted for all ages and conditions, and for either sex. British and American uniforms hung peaceably by the side of each other; and on the peg that supported a gown of striped calico, such

as was the usual country wear, was also depending a well powdered wig; in short, the attire was numerous, and as various as if a whole parish were to be equipped from this one wardrobe.

In the angle against the rock, and opposite to the fire which was burning in the other corner, was an open cupboard, that held a plate or two, a mug, and the remains of some broken meat. Before the fire was a table, with one of its legs fractured, and made of rough boards; these, with a single stool, composed the furniture, if we except a few articles of cooking. A book that, by its size and shape, appeared to be a Bible, was lying on the table, unopened. But it was the occupant of the hut in whom Frances was chiefly interested. This was a man, sitting on a stool, with his head leaning on his hand in such a manner as to conceal his features, and deeply occupied in examining some open papers. On the table lay a pair of curiously and richly mounted horseman's pistols; and the handle of a sheathed rapier of exquisite workmanship protruded from between the legs of the gentleman, one of whose hands carelessly rested on its guard. The tall stature of this unexpected tenant of the hut, and his form, much more athletic than that of either Harvey or her brother, told Frances, without the aid of his dress, that it was neither of those she sought. A close surtout was buttoned high in the throat of the stranger, and parting at his knees, showed breeches of buff, with military boots and spurs. His hair was dressed so as to expose the whole face; and, after the fashion of that day, it was profusely powdered. A round hat was laid on the stones that formed a paved floor to the hut, as if to make room for a large map, which, among the other papers, occupied the table.

This was an unexpected event to our adventuress. She had been so confident that the figure twice seen was the peddler, that on learning his agency in her brother's escape, she did not in the least doubt of finding them both in the place, which, she now discovered, was occupied by another and a stranger. She stood,

earnestly looking through the crevice, hesitating whether to retire, or to wait with the expectation of yet meeting Henry, as the stranger moved his hand from before his eyes, and raised his face, apparently in deep musing; when Frances instantly recognized the benevolent and strongly marked, but composed features of Harper.

All that Dunwoodie had said of his power and disposition; all that he had himself promised her brother, and all the confidence that had been created by his dignified and paternal manner, rushed across the mind of Frances, who threw open the door of the hut, and falling at his feet, clasped his knees with her arms, as she cried :

"Save him—save him—save my brother; remember your promise and save him !"

Harper had risen as the door opened, and there was a slight movement of one hand toward his pistols; but it was cool, and instantly checked. He raised the hood of the cardinal, which had fallen over her features, and exclaimed with some uneasiness :

"Miss Wharton ! But you cannot be alone ?"

"There is none here but my God and you ; and by his sacred name, I conjure you to remember your promise, and save my brother !"

Harper gently raised her from her knees, and placed her on the stool, begging her at the same time to be composed, and to acquaint him with the nature of her errand. This Frances instantly did, ingenuously admitting him to a knowledge of all her views in visiting that lone spot at such an hour, and by herself.

It was at all times difficult to probe the thoughts of one who held his passions in such disciplined subjection as Harper, but still there was a lightening of his thoughtful eye, and a slight unbending of his muscles, as the hurried and anxious girl proceeded in her narrative. His interest, as she dwelt upon the manner of Henry's escape and the flight to the woods, was deep and manifest, and he listened to the remainder of her tale with a marked ex-

pression of benevolent indulgence. Her apprehensions, that her brother might still be too late through the mountains, seemed to have much weight with him, for, as she concluded, he walked a turn or two across the hut, in silent musing.

Frances hesitated, and unconsciously played with the handle of one of the pistols, and the paleness that her fears had spread over her fine features began to give place to a rich tint, as, after a short pause, she added :

"We can depend much on the friendship of Major Dunwoodie, but his sense of honor is so pure, that—that—~~notwithstanding~~ his—his—feelings—his desire to serve us—he will conceive it to be his duty to apprehend my brother again. Besides, he thinks there will be no danger in so doing, as he relies greatly on your interference."

"On mine !" said Harper, raising his eyes in surprise.

"Yes, on yours. When we told him of your kind language, he at once assured us all that you had the power, and, if you had promised, would have the inclination, to procure Henry's pardon."

"Said he more ?" asked Harper, who appeared slightly uneasy.

"Nothing but reiterated assurances of Henry's safety ; even now he is in quest of you."

"Miss Wharton, that I bear no mean part in the unhappy struggle between England and America it might now be useless to deny. You owe your brother's escape, this night, to my knowledge of his innocence and the remembrance of my word. Major Dunwoodie is mistaken when he says that I might openly have procured his pardon. I now, indeed, can control his fate, and I pledge to you a word which has some influence with Washington, that means shall be taken to prevent his recapture. But from you, also, I exact a promise that this interview, and all that has passed between us, remain confined to your own bosom, until you have my permission to speak upon the subject."

Frances gave the desired assurance, and he continued :

"The peddler and your brother will soon

be here, but I must not be seen by the royal officer, or the life of Birch might be the forfeiture."

"Never!" cried Frances, ardently; "Henry could never be so base as to betray the man who saved him."

"It is no childish game that we are now playing, Miss Wharton. Men's lives and fortunes hang upon slender threads, and nothing must be left to accident that can be guarded against. Did Sir Henry Clinton know that the peddler had communion with me, and under such circumstances, the life of the miserable man would be taken instantly; therefore, as you value human blood, or remember the rescue of your brother, be prudent and be silent. Communicate what you know to them both, and urge them to instant departure. If they can reach the last pickets of our army before morning, it shall be my care that there are none to intercept them. There is better work for Major Dunwoodie than to be exposing the life of his friend."

While Harper was speaking, he carefully rolled up the map he had been studying, and placed it, together with sundry papers that were also open, into his pocket. He was still occupied in this manner, when the voice of the peddler, talking in unusually loud tones, was heard directly over their heads.

"Stand further this way, Captain Wharton, and you can see the tents in the moonshine. But let them mount and ride; I have a nest, here, that will hold us both, and we will go in at our leisure."

"And where is this nest? I confess that I have eaten but little the two last days, and I crave some of the cheer you mention."

"Hem!" said the peddler, exerting his voice still more, "hem—this fog has given me a cold; but move slow—and be careful not to slip, or you may land on the bayonet of the sentinel on the flats; it is a steep hill to rise, but one can go down it with ease."

Harper pressed his finger on his lip, to remind Frances of her promise, and, taking his pistols and hat, so that no vestige of his visit remained, he retired deliber-

ately to a far corner of the hut, where, lifting several articles of dress, he entered a recess in the rock, and letting them fall again, was hid from view. Frances noticed, by the strong firelight, as he entered, that it was a natural cavity, and contained nothing but a few more articles of domestic use.

The surprise of Henry and the peddler, on entering and finding Frances in possession of the hut, may be easily imagined. Without waiting for explanations or questions, the warm-hearted girl flew into the arms of her brother, and gave a vent to her emotions in tears. But the peddler seemed struck with very different feelings. His first look was at the fire, which had been recently supplied with fuel; he then drew open a small drawer of the table, and looked a little alarmed at finding it empty.

"Are you alone, Miss Fanny?" he asked, in a quick voice; "you did not come here alone?"

"As you see me, Mr. Birch," said Frances, raising herself from her brother's arms, and turning an expressive glance toward the secret cavern, that the quick eye of the peddler instantly understood.

"But why and wherefore are you here?" exclaimed her astonished brother; "and how knew you of this place at all?"

Frances entered at once into a brief detail of what had occurred at the house since their departure, and the motives which induced her to seek them.

"But," said Birch, "why follow us here, when we were left on the opposite hill?"

Frances related the glimpse that she had caught of the hut and peddler, in her passage through the Highlands, as well as her view of him on that day, and her immediate conjecture that the fugitives would seek the shelter of his habitation for the night. Birch examined her features as, with open ingenuousness, she related the simple incidents that had made her mistress of his secret; and, as she ended, he sprang upon his feet, and, striking the window with the stick in his hand, demolished it at a blow.

"'Tis but little luxury or comfort that

"I know," he said, "but even that little cannot be enjoyed in safety! Miss Wharton," he added, advancing before Fanny, and speaking with the bitter melancholy that was common to him, "I am hunted through these hills like a beast of the forest; but whenever, tired with my toils, I can reach this spot, poor and dreary as it is, I can spend my solitary nights in safety. Will you aid to make the life of a wretch still more miserable?"

"Never!" cried Frances, with fervor; "your secret is safe with me."

"Major Dunwoodie—" said the peddler, slowly turning an eye upon her that read her soul.

Frances lowered her head upon her bosom for a moment, in shame; then, elevating her fine and glowing face, she added, with enthusiasm:

"Never, never, Harvey, as God may hear my prayers!"

The peddler seemed satisfied; for he drew back, and, watching his opportunity, unseen by Henry, slipped behind the screen, and entered the cavern.

Frances and her brother, who thought his companion had passed through the door, continued conversing on the latter's situation for several minutes, when the former urged the necessity of expedition on his part, in order to precede Dunwoodie, from whose sense of duty they knew they had no escape. The captain took out his pocket-book and wrote a few lines with his pencil; then folding the paper, he handed it to his sister.

"Frances," he said, "you have this night proved yourself to be an incomparable woman. As you love me, give that unopened to Dunwoodie, and remember that two hours may save my life."

"I will—I will; but why delay? Why not fly, and improve these precious moments?"

"Your sister says well, Captain Wharton," exclaimed Harvey, who had re-entered unseen; "we must go at once. Here is food to eat, as we travel."

"But who is to see this fair creature in safety?" cried the captain. "I can never desert my sister in such a place as this."

"Leave me! leave me!" said Frances;

"I can descend as I came up. Do not doubt me; you know not my courage nor my strength."

"I have not known you, dear girl, it is true; but now, as I learn your value, can I quit you here? Never, never!"

"Captain Wharton," said Birch, throwing open the door, "you can trifle with your own lives, if you have many to spare. I have but one, and must nurse it. Do I go alone, or not?"

"Go, go, dear Henry," said Frances, embracing him; "go; remember our father; remember Sarah." She waited not for his answer, but gently forced him through the door and closed it with her own hands.

For a short time there was a warm debate between Henry and the peddler, but the latter finally prevailed, and the breathless girl heard the successive plunges, as they went down the sides of the mountain at a rapid rate.

Immediately after the noise of their departure had ceased, Harper reappeared. He took the arm of Frances in silence, and led her from the hut. The way seemed familiar to him; for, ascending to the ledge above them, he led his companion across the table-land tenderly, pointing out the little difficulties in their route, and cautioning her against injury.

Frances felt, as she walked by the side of this extraordinary man, that she was supported by one of no common stamp. The firmness of his step, and the composure of his manner, seemed to indicate a mind settled and resolved. By taking a route over the back of the hill, they descended with great expedition, and but little danger. The distance it had taken Frances an hour to conquer was passed by Harper and his companion in ten minutes, and they entered the open space already mentioned. He struck into one of the sheep-paths, and, crossing the clearing with rapid steps, they came suddenly upon a horse, caparisoned for a rider of no mean rank. The noble beast snorted and pawed the earth as his master approached and replaced the pistols in the holsters.

Harper then turned, and, taking the hand of Frances, spoke as follows:

"You have this night saved your brother, Miss Wharton. It would not be proper for me to explain why there are limits to my ability to serve him; but if you can detain the horse for two hours, he is assuredly safe. After what you have already done, I can believe you equal to any duty. God has denied to me children, young lady; but if it had been his blessed will that my marriage should not have been childless, such a treasure as yourself would I have asked from his mercy. But you are my child; all who dwell in this broad land are my children, and my care; and take the blessing of one who hopes yet to meet you in happier days."

As he spoke, with a solemnity that touched Frances to the heart, he laid his hand impressively upon her head. The guileless girl turned her face toward him, and the hood again falling back, exposed her lovely features to the moonbeams. A tear was glistening on either cheek, and her mild blue eyes were gazing upon him in reverence. Harper bent and pressed a paternal kiss upon her forehead, and continued—"Any of these sheep-paths will take you to the plain; but here we must part—I have much to do, and far to ride; forget me in all but your prayers."

He then mounted his horse, and lifting his hat, rode toward the back of the mountain, descending at the same time, and was soon hid by the trees. Frances sprang forward with a lightened heart, and taking the first path that led downward, in a few minutes she reached the plain in safety. While busied in stealing through the meadows toward the house, the noise of horses approaching startled her, and she felt how much more was to be apprehended from man, in some situations, than from solitude. Hiding her form in the angle of a fence near the road, she remained quiet for a moment, and watched their passage. A small party of dragoons, whose dress was different from the Virginians, passed at a brisk trot. They were followed by a gentleman, enveloped in a large cloak, whom she at once knew to be Harper. Behind him rode a black in livery, and two youths

in uniform brought up the rear. Instead of taking the road that led by the encampment, they turned short to the left, and entered the hills.

Wondering who this unknown but powerful friend of her brother could be, Frances glided across the fields, and using due precautions in approaching the dwelling, regained her residence undiscovered and in safety.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Hence, bashful cunning
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence;
I am your wife if you will marry me."

—TEMPEST.

On joining Miss Peyton, Frances learnt that Dunwoodie was not yet returned; although, with a view to relieve Henry from the importunities of the supposed fanatic, he had desired a very respectable divine of their own church to ride up from the river and offer his services. This gentleman was already arrived, and had been passing the half-hour he had been there in a sensible and well-bred conversation with the spinster, that in no degree touched upon their domestic affairs.

To the eager inquiries of Miss Peyton, relative to her success in her romantic excursion, Frances could say no more than that she was bound to be silent, and to recommend the same precaution to the good maiden also. There was a smile playing around the beautiful mouth of Frances, while she uttered this injunction, which satisfied her aunt that all was as it should be. She was urging her niece to take some refreshment after her fatiguing expedition, when the noise of a horseman riding to the door announced the return of the major. He had been found by the courier, who was dispatched by Mason, impatiently waiting the return of Harper to the ferry, and immediately flew to the place where his friend had been confined, tormented by a thousand conflicting fears. The heart of Frances bounded as she listened to his approaching footsteps. It wanted yet an hour to the termination of the shortest period that the peddler had fixed as the time neces-

sary to effect his escape. Even Harper, powerful and well-disposed as he acknowledged himself to be, had laid great stress upon the importance of detaining the Virginians during that hour. She, however, had not time to rally her thoughts before Dunwoodie entered one door, as Miss Peyton, with the readiness of female instinct, retired through another.

The countenance of Peyton was flushed, and an air of vexation and disappointment pervaded his manner.

"'Twas imprudent, Frances, nay, it was unkind," he cried, throwing himself in a chair, "to fly at the very moment that I had assured him of safety! I can almost persuade myself that you delight in creating points of difference in our feelings and duties."

"In our duties there may very possibly be a difference," returned his mistress, approaching, and leaning her slender form against the wall; "but not in our feelings, Peyton. You must certainly rejoice in the escape of Henry!"

"There was no danger impending. He had the promise of Harper, and it is a word never to be doubted. Oh! Frances! Frances! had you known the man, you would never have distrusted his assurance, nor would you have again reduced me to the distressing alternative."

"What alternative?" asked Frances, pitying his emotions deeply, but eagerly seizing upon every circumstance to prolong the interview.

"What alternative! Am I not compelled to spend this night in the saddle to recapture your brother, when I had thought to lay my head on its pillow, with the happy consciousness of having contributed to his release? You make me seem your enemy; I, who would cheerfully shed the last drop of blood in your service. I repeat, Frances, it was rash; it was unkind; it was a sad, sad mistake."

She bent toward him, and timidly took one of his hands, while with the other she gently removed the curls from his burning brow.

"Why go at all, dear Peyton?" she asked; "you have done much for your

country, and she cannot exact such a sacrifice as this at your hand."

"Frances! Miss Wharton!" exclaimed the youth, springing on his feet and pacing the floor with a cheek that burned through its brown covering, and an eye that sparkled with wounded integrity; "it is not my country, but my honor, that requires the sacrifice. Has he not fled from a guard of my own corps? But for this, I might have been spared the blow! But if the eyes of the Virginians are blinded to deception and artifice, their horses are swift of foot and their sabers keen. We shall see, before to-morrow's sun, who will presume to hint that the beauty of the sister furnished a mask to conceal the brother! Yes, yes; I should like, even now," he continued, laughing bitterly, "to hear the villain who would dare to surmise that such treachery existed!"

"Peyton, dear Peyton," said Frances, recoiling from his angry eye, "you curdle my blood—would you kill my brother?"

"Would I not die for him?" exclaimed Dunwoodie, as he turned to her more mildly; "you know I would; but I am distracted with the cruel surmise to which this step of Henry's subjects me. What will Washington think of me, should he learn that I ever became your husband?"

"If that alone impels you to act so harshly toward my brother," returned Frances, with a slight tremor in her voice, "let it never happen for him to learn."

"And this is consolation, Frances!"

"Nay, dear Dunwoodie, I meant nothing harsh or unkind; but are you not making us both of more consequence with Washington than the truth will justify?"

"I trust that my name is not entirely unknown to the commander-in-chief," said the major, a little proudly; "nor are you as obscure as your modesty would make you. I believe you, Frances, when you say that you pity me, and it must be my task to continue worthy of such feelings. But I waste the precious moments; we must go through the hills to-night, that we may be refreshed in time for the duty of to-morrow. Mason is already waiting my orders to mount. Frances, I leave

you with a heavy heart; pity me, but feel no concern for your brother; he must again become a prisoner, but every hair of his head is sacred."

"Stop! Dunwoodie, I conjure you," cried Frances, gasping for breath, as she noticed that the hand of the clock still wanted many minutes to the desired hour; "before you go on your errand of fastidious duty, read this note that Henry has left for you, and which, doubtless, he thought he was writing to the friend of his youth."

"Frances, I excuse your feelings; but the time will come when you will do me justice."

"That time is now," she answered, extending her hand, unable any longer to feign a displeasure that she did not feel.

"Where got you this note?" exclaimed the youth, glancing his eyes over its contents. "Poor Henry, you are indeed my friend! If any one wishes me happiness, it is you!"

"He does, he does," cried Frances, eagerly; "he wishes you every happiness; believe what he tells you; every word is true."

"I do believe him, lovely girl, and he refers me to you for its confirmation. Would that I could trust equally to your affections!"

"You may, Peyton," said Frances, looking up with innocent confidence toward her lover.

"Then read for yourself, and verify your words," interrupted Dunwoodie, holding the note toward her.

Frances received it in astonishment, and read the following:

"Life is too precious to be trusted to uncertainties. I leave you, Peyton, unknown to all, but Cæsar, and I recommend him to your mercy. But there is a care that weighs me to the earth. Look at my aged and infirm parent. He will be reproached for the supposed crime of his son. Look at those helpless sisters that I leave behind me without a protector. Prove to me that you love us all. Let the clergyman whom you will bring with

you unite you this night to Frances, and become at once brother, son, and husband."

The paper fell from the hands of Frances, and she endeavored to raise her eyes to the face of Dunwoodie, but they sank abashed to the floor.

"Am I worthy of this confidence? Will you send me out this night, to meet my own brother? or will it be the officer of Congress in quest of the officer of Britain?"

"And would you do less of your duty because I am your wife, Major Dunwoodie? In what degree would it better the condition of Henry?"

"Henry, I repeat, is safe. The word of Harper is his guarantee; but I will show the world a bridegroom," continued the youth, perhaps deceiving himself a little, "who is equal to the duty of arresting the brother of his bride."

"And will the world comprehend this refinement?" said Frances, with a musing air, that lighted a thousand hopes in the bosom of her lover. In fact, the temptation was mighty. Indeed, there seemed no other way to detain Dunwoodie until the fatal hour had elapsed. The words of Harper himself, who had so lately told her that openly he could do but little for Henry, and that everything depended upon gaining time, were deeply engraved upon her memory. Perhaps there was also a fleeting thought of the possibility of an eternal separation from her lover, should he proceed and bring back her brother to punishment. It is difficult at all times to analyze human emotions, and they pass through the sensitive heart of a woman with the rapidity and nearly with the vividness of lightning.

"Why do you hesitate, dear Frances?" cried Dunwoodie, who was studying her varying countenance; "a few minutes might give me a husband's claim to protect you."

Frances grew giddy. She turned an anxious eye to the clock, and the hand seemed to linger over its face, as if with intent to torture her.

"Speak, Frances," murmured Dun-

woodie; "may I summon my good kinswoman? Determine, for time presses."

She endeavored to reply, but could only whisper something that was inaudible, but which her lover, with the privilege of immemorial custom, construed into assent. He turned and flew to the door, when his mistress recovered her voice:

"Stop, Peyton! I cannot enter into such a solemn engagement with a fraud upon my conscience. I have seen Henry since his escape, and time is all-important to him. Here is my hand; if, with this knowledge of the consequences of delay, you will not reject it, it is freely yours."

"Reject it!" cried the delighted youth; "I take it as the richest gift of heaven. There is time enough for us all. Two hours will take me through the hills; and by noon to-morrow I will return with Washington's pardon for your brother, and Henry will help to enliven our nuptials."

"Then meet me here in ten minutes," said Frances, greatly relieved by unburthening her mind, and filled with the hope of securing Henry's safety, "and I will return and take those vows which will bind me to you forever."

Dunwoodie paused only to press her once to his bosom, and flew to communicate his wishes to the priest.

Miss Peyton received the avowal of her niece with infinite astonishment, and a little displeasure. It was violating all the order and decorum of a wedding to get it up so hastily, and with so little ceremony. But Frances, with modest firmness, declared that her resolution was taken; she had long possessed the consent of her friends, and their nuptials, for months, had only waited her pleasure. She had now promised Dunwoodie, and it was her wish to comply; more she dare not say without committing herself, by entering into explanations that might endanger Birch or Harper, or both. Unused to contention, and really much attached to her kinsman, the feeble objections of Miss Peyton gave way to the firmness of her niece. Mr. Wharton was too completely a convert to the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance to withstand any

solicitation from an officer of Dunwoodie's influence in the rebel armies; and the maid returned to the apartment, accompanied by her father and aunt, at the expiration of the time that she had fixed. Dunwoodie and the clergyman were already there. Frances silently, and without the affectation of reserve, placed in his hand the wedding-ring of her own mother, and, after some little time spent in arranging Mr. Wharton and herself, Miss Peyton suffered the ceremony to proceed.

The clock stood directly before the eyes of Frances, and she turned many an anxious glance at the dial; but the solemn language of the priest soon caught her attention, and her mind became intent upon the vows she was uttering. The ceremony was quickly over, and as the clergyman closed the words of benediction, the clock told the hour of nine. This was the time that Harper had deemed so important, and Frances felt as if a mighty load was at once removed from her heart.

Dunwoodie folded her in his arms, saluted the mild aunt again and again, and shook Mr. Wharton and the divine repeatedly by the hand. In the midst of the felicitation, a tap was heard at the door. It was opened, and Mason appeared.

"We are in the saddle," said the lieutenant, "and, with your permission, I will lead on; as you are so well mounted, you can overtake us at your leisure."

"Yes, yes, my good fellow; march," cried Dunwoodie, gladly seizing an excuse to linger; "I will reach you at the first halt."

The subaltern retired to execute these orders; he was followed by Mr. Wharton and the divine.

"Now, Peyton," said Frances, "it is indeed a brother that you seek; I am sure I need not caution you in his behalf, should you unfortunately find him."

"Say fortunately," cried the youth; "for I am determined he shall yet dance at my wedding. Would that I could win him to our cause! it is the cause of his country; and I could fight with more

pleasure, Frances, with your brother by my side."

"Oh! mention it not! you awaken terrible reflections."

"I will not mention it," returned her husband; "but I must now leave you. But the sooner I go, Frances, the sooner I shall return."

The noise of a horseman was heard approaching the house, and Dunwoodie was yet taking leave of his bride and her aunt, when an officer was shown into the room by his own man.

The gentleman wore the dress of an aid-de-camp, and the major at once knew him to be one of the military family of Washington.

"Major Dunwoodie," he said, after bowing to the ladies, "the commander-in-chief has directed me to give you these orders."

He executed his mission, and, pleading duty, took his leave immediately.

"Here, indeed," cried the major, "is an unexpected turn in the whole affair; but I understand it; Harper has got my letter, and already we feel his influence."

"Have you news affecting Henry?" cried Frances, springing to his side.

"Listen and you shall judge."

"SIR: Upon the receipt of this, you will concentrate your squadron, so as to be in front of a covering party which the enemy has sent up in front of his forager, by ten o'clock to-morrow, on the heights of Croton, where you will find a body of foot to support you. The escape of the English spy has been reported to me, but his arrest is unimportant, compared with the duty I now assign you. You will, therefore, recall your men, if any are in pursuit, and endeavor to defeat the enemy forthwith.

"Your obedient servant,
GEORGE WASHINGTON."

"Thank God!" cried Dunwoodie, "my hands are washed of Henry's recapture; I can now move to my duty with honor."

"And with prudence, too, dear Peyton," said Frances, with a face as pale as death; "remember, Dunwoodie, you

leave behind you new claims on your life."

The youth dwelt on her lovely but pallid features with rapture; and, as he folded her to his heart, exclaimed:

"For your sake, I will, lovely innocent!" Frances sobbed a moment on his bosom, and he tore himself from her presence.

Miss Peyton retired with her niece, to whom she conceived it necessary, before they separated for the night, to give an admonitory lecture on the subject of matrimonial duty. Her instruction was modestly received, if not properly digested. We regret that history has not handed down to us this precious dissertation; but the result of all our investigation has been to learn that it partook largely of those peculiarities which are said to tincture the rules prescribed to govern bachelor's children. We shall now leave the ladies of the Wharton family, and return to Captain Wharton and Harvey Birch.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE peddler and his companion soon reached the valley, and, after pausing to listen, and hearing no sounds which announced that pursuers were abroad, they entered the highway. Acquainted with every step that led through the mountains, and possessed of sinews inured to toil, Birch led the way with the lengthened strides that were peculiar to the man and his profession; his pack alone was wanting to finish the appearance of his ordinary business air. At times, when they approached one of those little posts held by the American troops, with which the Highlands abounded, he would take a circuit to avoid the sentinels, and plunge fearlessly into a thicket, or ascend a rugged hill that to the eye seemed impassable. But the peddler was familiar with every turn in their difficult route, knew where the ravines might be penetrated, or where the streams were fordable. In one or two instances, Henry thought that their further progress was absolutely at

an end, but the ingenuity, or knowledge, of his guide, conquered every difficulty.

After walking at a great rate for three hours, they suddenly diverged from the road, which inclined to the east, and held their course directly across the hills, in a due south direction. This movement was made, the peddler informed his companion, in order to avoid the parties who constantly patrolled in the southern entrance of the Highlands, as well as to shorten the distance by traveling in a straight line. After reaching the summit of a hill, Harvey seated himself by the side of a little run, and, opening a wallet that he had slung where his pack was commonly suspended, he invited his comrade to partake of the coarse fare it contained. Henry had kept pace with the peddler, more by the excitement natural to his situation than by the equality of his physical powers. The idea of a halt was unpleasant, so long as there existed a possibility of the horse getting below him in time to intercept their retreat through the neutral ground. He therefore stated his apprehensions to his companion, and urged a wish to proceed.

"Follow my example, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, commencing his frugal meal; "if the horse have started, it will be more than man can do to head them; and if they have not, work is cut out for them that will drive all thoughts of you and me from their brains."

"You said, yourself, that two hours' detention was all-important to us, and if we loiter here, of what use will be the advantage that we may have already obtained?"

"The time is passed, and Major Dunwoodie thinks little of following two men, when hundreds are waiting for him on the banks of the river."

"Listen," interrupted Henry; "there are horse at this moment passing the foot of the hill. I hear them even laughing and talking to each other. Hist! there is the voice of Dunwoodie himself; he calls to his comrades in a manner that shows but little uneasiness. One would think that the situation of his friend

would lower his spirits; surely Frances could not have given him the letter."

On hearing the first exclamation of the captain, Birch arose from his seat, and approached cautiously to the brow of the hill, taking care to keep his body in the shadow of the rocks, so as to be unseen at any distance, and earnestly reconnoitered the group of passing horsemen. He continued listening until their footsteps were no longer audible, and then quietly returned to his seat, and with incomparable coolness resumed his meal.

"You have a long walk, and a tiresome one, before you, Captain Wharton; you had better do as I do—you were eager for food at the hut above Fishkill, but traveling seems to have worn down your appetite."

"I thought myself safe then, but the information of my sister fills me with uneasiness, and I cannot eat."

"You have less reason to be troubled now than at any time since the night before you were taken, when you refused my advice and an offer to see you in, in safety," returned the peddler. "Major Dunwoodie is not a man to laugh and be gay when his friend is in difficulty. Come, then, and eat, for no horse will be in our way, if we can hold our legs for four hours longer, and the sun keeps behind the hills as long as common."

There was a composure in the peddler's manner that encouraged his companion; and having once determined to submit to Harvey's government, he suffered himself to be persuaded into a tolerable supper, if quantity be considered without any reference to the quality. After completing their repast, the peddler resumed his journey.

Henry followed in blind submission to his will. For two hours more they struggled with the difficult and dangerous passes of the Highlands, without road or any other guide than the moon, which was traveling the heavens, now wading through flying clouds, and now shining brightly. At length they arrived at a point where the mountains sunk into rough and unequal hillocks, and passed at once from the barren sterility of the precipices

to the imperfect culture of the neutral ground.

The peddler now became more guarded in the manner in which they proceeded, and took divers precautions to prevent meeting any moving parties of the Americans. With the stationary posts he was too familiar to render it probable he might fall upon any of them unawares. He wound among the hills and vales, now keeping the highways and now avoiding them, with a precision that seemed instinctive. There was nothing elastic in his tread, but he glided over the ground with enormous strides and a body bent forward, without appearing to use exertion or know weariness.

The moon had set, and a faint streak of light was beginning to show itself in the east. Captain Wharton ventured to express a sense of fatigue, and to inquire if they were not yet arrived at a part of the country where it might be safe to apply at some of the farm-houses for admission.

"See here," said the peddler, pointing to a hill, at a short distance in their rear; "do you not see a man walking on the point of that rock? Turn, so as to bring the daylight in the range—now, see, he moves, and seems to be looking earnestly at something to the eastward. That is a royal sentinel; two hundred of the rig'lar troops lay on that hill, no doubt sleeping on their arms."

"Then," cried Henry, "let us join them, and our danger is ended."

"Softly, softly, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, dryly, "you've once been in the midst of three hundred of them, but there was a man who could take you out; see you not yon dark body, on the side of the opposite hill, just above the corn-stalks? There are the—the rebels (since that is the word for us royal subjects), waiting only for day, to see who will be master of the ground."

"Nay, then," exclaimed the fiery youth, "I will join the troops of my prince, and share their fortunes, be it good or be it bad."

"You forget that you fight with a halter round your neck; no, no—I have

promised one whom I must not disappoint, to carry you safe in, and unless you forget what I have already done, and what I have risked for you, Captain Wharton, you will turn and follow me to Harlem."

To this appeal the youth felt unwillingly obliged to submit; and they continued their course toward the city. It was not long before they gained the banks of the Hudson. After searching for a short time under the shore, the peddler discovered a skiff, that appeared to be an old acquaintance; and entering it with his companion, he landed him on the south side of the Croton. Here Birch declared they were in safety; for the royal troops held the Continentals at bay, and the former were out in too great strength for the light parties of the latter to trust themselves below that river on the immediate banks of the Hudson.

Throughout the whole of this arduous flight the peddler had manifested a coolness and presence of mind that nothing appeared to disturb. All his faculties seemed to be of more than usual perfection, and the infirmities of nature to have no dominion over him. Henry had followed him like a child in leading-strings, and he now reaped his reward, as he felt a bound of pleasure at his heart on hearing that he was relieved from apprehension and permitted to banish every doubt of security.

A steep and laborious ascent brought them from the level of the tide-waters to the highlands that form, in this part of the river, the eastern banks of the Hudson. Retiring a little from the highway, under the shelter of a thicket of cedars, the peddler threw his form on a flat rock, and announced to his companion that the hour for rest and refreshment was at length arrived. The day was now opened and objects could be seen in the distance with distinctness. Beneath them lay the Hudson, stretching to the south in a straight line, as far as the eye could reach. To the north, the broken fragments of the Highlands threw upward their lofty heads, above masses of fog that hung over the water, and by which the course of the river could be traced into

the bosom of the hills, whose conical summits were grouping together, one behind another, in that disorder which might be supposed to have succeeded their gigantic but fruitless efforts to stop the progress of the flood. Emerging from these confused piles, the river, as if rejoicing at its release from the struggle, expanded into a wide bay, which was ornamented by a few fertile and low points that jutted humbly into its broad basin.

On the opposite or western shore, the rocks of Jersey were gathered into an array that has obtained for them the name of the *palisadoes*, elevating themselves for many hundred feet, as if to protect the rich country in their rear from the inroads of the conqueror; but, disdaining such an enemy, the river swept proudly by their feet, and held its undeviating way to the ocean. A ray of the rising sun darted upon the slight cloud that hung over the placid river, and at once the whole scene was in motion, changing and assuming new forms, and exhibiting fresh objects in each successive moment. At the daily rising of this great curtain of nature, at the present time, scores of white sails and sluggish vessels are seen thickening on the water, with that air of life which denotes the neighborhood to the metropolis of a great and flourishing empire; but to Henry and the peddler it displayed only the square yards and lofty masts of a vessel of war, riding a few miles below them. Before the fog had begun to move, the tall spars were seen above it, and from one of them a long pennant was feebly borne abroad in the current of night air that still quivered along the river; but as the smoke arose, the black hull, the crowded and complicated mass of rigging, and the heavy yards and booms, spreading their arms afar, were successively brought into view.

"There, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, "there is a safe resting-place for you; America has no arm that can reach you, if you gain the deck of that ship. She is sent up to cover the foragers, and support the troops; the rig'lar officers are fond of the sound of cannon from their shipping."

Without condescending to reply to the sarcasm conveyed in this speech, or perhaps not noticing it, Henry joyfully acquiesced in the proposal, and it was accordingly arranged between them that, as soon as they were refreshed, he should endeavor to get on board the vessel.

While busily occupied in the very indispensable operation of breaking their fast, our adventurers were startled with the sound of distant firearms. At first a few scattering shots were fired, which were succeeded by a long and animated roll of musketry, and then quick and heavy volleys followed each other.

"Your prophecy is made good," cried the English officer, springing upon his feet. "Our troops and the rebels are at it! I would give six months' pay to see the charge."

"Umph!" returned his companion, without ceasing his meal; "they do very well to look at from a distance. I can't say but the company of this bacon, cold as it is, is more to my taste, just now, than a hot fire from the continentals."

"The discharges are heavy for so small a force; but the fire seems irregular."

"The scattering guns are from the Connecticut militia," said Harvey, raising his head to listen; "they rattle it off finely, and are no fools at a mark. The volleys are the rig'lars, who, you know, fire by word—as long as they can."

"I like not the warmth of what you call a scattering fire," exclaimed the captain, moving about with uneasiness; "it is more like the roll of a drum than the shooting of skirmishers."

"No, no; I said not skrimmagers," returned the other, raising himself upon a knee and ceasing to eat; "so long as they stand, they are too good for the best troops in the royal army. Each man does his work, as if fighting by the job; and then they think while they fight, and don't send bullets among the clouds, that were meant to kill men upon earth."

"You talk and look, sir, as if you wished them success," said Henry, sternly.

"I wish success to the good cause only, Captain Wharton. I thought you knew

me too well, to be uncertain which party I favored."

"Oh! you are reputed loyal, Mr. Birch. But the volleys have ceased!"

Both now listened intently for a little while, during which the irregular reports became less brisk, and suddenly heavy and repeated volleys followed.

"They've been at the bayonet," said the peddler; "the rig'lars have tried the bayonet, and the rebels are driven."

"Ay, Mr. Birch, the bayonet is the thing for the British soldier, after all. They delight in the bayonet!"

"Well, to my notion," said the peddler, "there's but little delight to be taken in any such fearful weapon. I dare say the militia are of my mind, for half of them don't carry the ugly things. Lord! Lord! captain, I wish you'd go with me once into the rebel camp, and hear what lies the men will tell about Bunker Hill and Burg'yn; you'd think they loved the bayonet as much as they do their dinners."

There was a chuckle, and an air of affected innocency about his companion, that rather annoyed Henry, and he did not deign to reply.

The firing now became desultory, occasionally intermingled with heavy volleys. Both of the fugitives were standing, listening with much anxiety, when a man, armed with a musket, was seen stealing toward them, under the shelter of the cedar-bushes that partially covered the hill. Henry first observed this suspicious-looking stranger, and instantly pointed him out to his companion. Birch started, and certainly made an indication of sudden flight; but recollecting himself, he stood, in sullen silence, until the stranger was within a few yards of them.

"'Tis friends," said the fellow, clubbing his gun, but apparently afraid to venture nearer.

"You had better retire," said Birch; "here are rig'lars at hand. We are not near Dunwoodie's horse now, and you will not find me an easy prize to-day."

"Damn Major Dunwoodie and his horse!" cried the leader of the Skinners (for it was he); "God bless King George!

and a speedy end to the rebellion, say I. If you would show me the safe way into the refugees, Mr. Birch, I'll pay you well, and ever after stand your friend, in the bargain."

"The road is as open to you as to me," said Birch, turning from him in ill-concealed disgust; "if you want to find the refugees, you know well where they lay."

"Ay, but I'm a little doubtful of going in upon them by myself; now, you are well known to them all, and it will be no detriment to you just to let me go in with you."

Henry here interfered, and after holding a short dialogue with the fellow, he entered into a compact with him, that, on condition of surrendering his arms, he might join the party. The man complied instantly, and Birch received his gun with eagerness; nor did he lay it upon his shoulder to renew their march, before he had carefully examined the priming and ascertained, to his satisfaction, that it contained a good dry ball-cart-ridge.

As soon as this engagement was completed, they commenced their journey anew. By following the bank of the river, Birch led the way free from observation, until they reached the point opposite to the frigate, when, by making a signal, a boat was induced to approach. Some time was spent, and much precaution used, before the seamen would trust themselves ashore; but Henry having finally succeeded in making the officer who commanded the party credit his assertions, he was able to rejoin his companions in arms in safety. Before taking leave of Birch, the captain handed him his purse, which was tolerably well supplied for the times; the peddler received it, and, watching an opportunity, he conveyed it, unnoticed by the Skinner, to a part of his dress that was ingeniously contrived to hold such treasures.

The boat pulled from the shore, and Birch turned on his heel, drawing his breath like one relieved, and shot up the hills with the strides for which he was famous. The Skinner followed, and each party pursued the common course, casting

frequent and suspicious glances at the other, and both maintaining a most impenetrable silence.

Wagons were moving along the river road, and occasional parties of horse were seen escorting the fruits of the inroad toward the city. As the peddler had views of his own, he rather avoided falling in with any of these patrols than sought their protection. But, after traveling a few miles on the immediate banks of the river, during which, notwithstanding the repeated efforts of the Skinner to establish something like sociability, he maintained a most determined silence, keeping a firm hold of the gun, and always maintaining a jealous watchfulness of his associate, the peddler suddenly struck into the highway, with an intention of crossing the hills toward Harlem.

At the moment he gained the path, a body of horse came over a little eminence, and was upon him before he perceived them. It was too late to retreat; and after taking a view of the materials that composed this party, Birch rejoiced at the rencontre, as a probable means of relieving him from his unwelcome companion. There were some eighteen or twenty men, mounted and equipped as dragoons, though neither their appearance nor manners denoted much discipline. At their head rode a heavy, middle-aged man, whose features expressed as much of animal courage and as little of reason as could be desired for such an occupation. He wore the dress of an officer, but there was none of that neatness in his attire, nor grace in his movements, that was usually found about the gentlemen who bore the royal commission. His limbs were firm, and not pliable, and he sat his horse with strength and confidence, but his bridle-hand would have been ridiculed by the meanest rider among the Virginians. As he expected, this leader instantly hailed the peddler, in a voice by no means more conciliating than his appearance.

"Hey? my gentlemen, which way so fast?" he cried. "Has Washington sent you down as spies?"

"I am an innocent peddler," returned

Harvey, meekly, "and am going below, to lay in a fresh stock of goods."

"And how do you expect to get below, my innocent peddler? Do you think we hold the forts at Kingsbridge to cover such peddling rascals as you, in your goings in and comings out?"

"I believe I hold a pass that will carry me through," said the peddler, handing him a paper, with an air of great indifference.

The officer, for such he was, read it and cast a look of surprise and curiosity at Harvey when he had done.

Then turning to one or two of his men, who had officiously stopped the way, he cried:

"Why do you detain the man? give way, and let him pass in peace; but who have we here? Your name is not mentioned in the pass!"

"No, sir," said the Skinner, lifting his hat with humility. "I have been a poor deluded man, who has been serving in the rebel army; but, thank God, I've lived to see the error of my ways, and am now come to make reparation, by enlisting under the Lord's anointed."

"Umph! a deserter—a Skinner, I'll swear, wanting to turn Cow-boy! In the last brush I had with the scoundrels I could hardly tell my own men from the enemy. We are not overwell supplied with coats, and as for countenances, the rascals change sides so often that you may as well count their faces for nothing; but trudge on, we will contrive to make use of you sooner or later."

Ungracious as was this reception, if you could judge of the Skinner's feelings from his manner, it nevertheless delighted him. He moved with alacrity toward the city, and really was so happy to escape the brutal looks and frightful manner of his interrogator as to lose sight of all other considerations. But the man who performed the functions of orderly in the irregular troop rode up to the side of his commander and commenced a close and apparently a confidential discourse with his principal. They spoke in whispers and cast frequent and searching glances at the Skinner, until the fellow began to

think himself an object of more than common attention. His satisfaction at this distinction was somewhat heightened at observing a smile on the face of the captain, which, although it might be thought grim, certainly denoted satisfaction. This pantomime occupied the time they were passing a hollow, and concluded as they rose another hill. Here the captain and his sergeant both dismounted and ordered the party to halt. The two partisans each took a pistol from his holster, a movement that excited no suspicion or alarm, as it was a precaution always observed, and beckoned to the peddler and the Skinner to follow. A short walk brought them to a spot where the hill overhung the river, the ground falling nearly perpendicular to the shore. On the brow of the eminence stood a deserted and dilapidated barn. Many boards of its covering were torn from their places, and its wide doors were lying, the one in front of the building, and the other half-way down the precipice, whither the wind had cast it.

Entering this desolate spot, the refugee officer very coolly took from his pocket a short pipe, which, from long use, had acquired not only the hue but the gloss of ebony, a tobacco-box, and a small roll of leather, that contained steel, flint and tinder. With this apparatus, he soon furnished his mouth with a companion that habit had long rendered necessary to reflection. So soon as a large column of smoke arose from this arrangement, the captain significantly held forth a hand toward his assistant. A small cord was produced from the pocket of the sergeant and handed to the other. The refugee threw out vast puffs of smoke, until nearly all of his head was obscured, and looked around the building with an inquisitive eye. At length he removed the pipe, and inhaling a draught of pure air, returned it to its domicile, and proceeded at once to business. A heavy piece of timber lay across the girths of the barn, but a little way from the southern door, which opened directly upon a full view of the river, as it stretched far away toward the bay of New York. Over this beam the refugee threw one end of the rope, and, regaining it,

joined the two parts in his hand. A small and weak barrel, that wanted a head, the staves of which were loose, and at one end standing apart, was left on the floor, probably, as useless. The sergeant, in obedience to a look from his officer, placed it beneath the beam. All of these arrangements were made with immovable composure, and they now seemed completed to the officer's perfect satisfaction.

"Come," he said coolly to the Skinner, who, admiring the preparations, had stood a silent spectator of their progress. He obeyed, and it was not until he found his neck-cloth removed, and hat thrown aside, that he took the alarm. But he had so often resorted to a similar expedient to extort information, or plunder, that he by no means felt the terror an unpracticed man would have suffered at these ominous movements. The rope was adjusted to his neck with the same coolness that formed the characteristic of the whole movement, and a fragment of a board being laid upon the barrel, he was ordered to mount.

"But it may fall," said the Skinner, for the first time beginning to tremble. "I will tell you anything—even how to surprise our party at the Pond, without all this trouble, and it is commanded by my own brother."

"I want no information," returned his executioner (for such he now seemed really to be), throwing the rope repeatedly over the beam, first drawing it tight so as to annoy the Skinner a little, and then casting the end from him, beyond the reach of any one.

"This is joking too far," cried the Skinner in a tone of remonstrance, and raising himself on his toes, with the vain hope of releasing himself from the cord, by slipping his head through the noose. But the caution and experience of the refugee officer had guarded against this escape.

"What have you done with the horse you stole from me, rascal?" muttered the officer of the Cow-boys, throwing out volumes of smoke while he waited for a reply.

"He broke down in the chaise," replied the Skinner, quickly; "but I can tell you

where one is to be found that is worth him and his sire."

"Liar! I will help myself when I am in need; you had better call upon God for aid, as your hour is short." On concluding this consoling advice, he struck the barrel a violent blow with his heavy boot, and the slender staves flew in every direction, leaving the Skinner whirling in the air. As his hands were unconfined, he threw them upward and held himself suspended by main strength.

"Come, captain," he said, coaxingly, a little huskiness creeping into his voice, and his knees beginning to shake with tremor, "end the joke; 'tis enough to make a laugh, and my arms begin to tire—I can't hold on much longer."

"Harkee, Mr. Peddler," said the refugee, in a voice that would not be denied, "I want not your company. Through that door lies your road—march! offer to touch that door, and you'll swing in its place, though twenty Sir Henriets wanted your services." So saying, he retired to the road with the sergeant, as the peddler precipitately retreated down the bank.

Birch went no farther than a bush that opportunely offered itself as a screen to his person, while he yielded to an unconquerable desire to witness the termination of this extraordinary scene.

Left alone the Skinner began to throw fearful glances around, to espy the hiding-places of his tormentors. For the first time the horrid idea seemed to shoot through his brain that something serious was intended by the Cow-boy. He called entreatingly to be released, and made rapid and incoherent promises of important information, mingled with affected pleasantry at their conceit, which he would hardly admit to himself could mean anything so dreadful as it seemed. But as he heard the tread of the horses moving on their course, and in vain looked around for human aid, violent trembling seized his limbs, and his eyes began to start from his head with terror. He made a desperate effort to reach the beam; but, too much exhausted with his previous exertions, he caught the rope in his teeth, in a vain effort to sever the

cord, and fell to the whole length of his arms. Here his cries were turned into shrieks:

"Help! cut the rope! captain!—Birch! good peddler! down with the Congress!—sergeant!—for God's sake, help! Hurrah for the king!—Oh God! oh God!—mercy—mercy—mercy!"

As his voice became suppressed one of his hands endeavored to make its way between the rope and his neck, and partially succeeded; but the other fell quivering by his side. A convulsive shuddering passed over his whole frame, and he hung a hideous corpse.

Birch continued gazing on this scene with a kind of infatuation. At its close he placed his hands to his ears, and rushed toward the highway. Still the cries for mercy rang through his brain, and it was many weeks before his memory ceased to dwell on the horrid event. The Cow-boys rode steadily on their route, as if nothing had occurred; and the body was left swinging in the wind, until chance directed the footsteps of some straggler to the place.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days;
None knew thee but to love thee,
None named thee but to praise."

WHILE the scenes and events that we have recorded were occurring, Captain Lawton led his small party, by slow and wary marches, from the Four Corners to the front of a body of the enemy; where he so successfully maneuvered, for a short time, as completely to elude all their efforts to entrap him, and yet so disguised his own force as to excite the constant apprehension of an attack from the Americans. This forbearing policy, on the side of the partisan, was owing to positive orders received from his commander. When Dunwoodie left his detachment, the enemy were known to be slowly advancing, and he directed Lawton to hover around them, until his own return, and the arrival of a body of foot, might enable him to intercept their retreat.

The trooper discharged his duty to the letter, but with no little of the impatience that made part of his character when restrained from the attack.

During these movements Betty Flanagan guided her little cart with indefatigable zeal among the rocks of Westchester, now discussing with the sergeant the nature of evil spirits, and now combating with the surgeon sundry points of practice that were hourly arising between them. But the moment at length arrived that was to decide the temporary mastery of the field. A detachment of the eastern militia moved out from their fastnesses and approached the enemy.

The junction between Lawton and his auxiliaries was made at midnight, and an immediate consultation was held between him and the leader of the foot-soldiers. After listening to the statements of the partisan, who rather despised the prowess of his enemy, the commandant of the party determined to attack the British the moment daylight enabled him to reconnoiter their position, without waiting for the aid of Dunwoodie and his horse. So soon as this decision was made, Lawton retired from the building where the consultation was held, and rejoined his own small command.

The few troopers who were with the captain had fastened their horses in a spot adjacent to a haystack, and laid their own frames under its shelter, to catch a few hours' sleep. But Dr. Sitgreaves, Sergeant Hollister, and Betty Flanagan were congregated at a short distance by themselves, having spread a few blankets upon the dry surface of a rock. Lawton threw his huge frame by the side of the surgeon, and folding his cloak about him leaned his head upon one hand, and appeared deeply engaged in contemplating the moon as it waded through the heavens. The sergeant was sitting upright, in respectful deference to the surgeon, and the washerwoman was now raising her head, in order to vindicate some of her favorite maxims, and now composing it on one of her gin-casks, in a vain effort to sleep.

"So, sergeant," continued Sitgreaves, following up a previous position, "if you cut upward, the blow, by losing the additional momentum of your weight, will be less destructive, and at the same time effect the true purposes of war, that of disabling your enemy."

"Pooh! pooh! sergeant, dear," said the washerwoman, raising her head from the blanket; "where's the harm of taking a life, jist in the way of battle? Is it the rig'lars who'll show favor, and they fighting? Ask Captain Jack there, if the country could get the liberty, and the boys no strike their might. I wouldn't have them disparage the whiskey so much."

"It is not to be expected that an ignorant female like yourself, Mrs. Flanagan," returned the surgeon, with a calmness that only rendered his contempt more stinging to Betty, "can comprehend the distinctions of surgical science, neither are you accomplished in the sword exercise; so that dissertations upon the judicious use of that weapon could avail you nothing either in theory or in practice."

"It's but little I care, any way, for such botherments; but fighting is no play, and a body shouldn't be particular how they strike, or who they hit, so it's the inimy."

"Are we likely to have a warm day, Captain Lawton?"

"'Tis more than probable," replied the trooper; "these militia seldom fail making a bloody field, either by their cowardice or their ignorance, and the real soldier is made to suffer for their bad conduct."

"Are you ill, John?" said the surgeon, passing his hand along the arm of the captain, until it instinctively settled on his pulse; but the steady, even beat announced neither bodily nor mental malady.

"Sick at heart, Archibald, at the folly of our rulers, in believing that battles are to be fought and victories won by fellows who handle a musket as they would a flail; lads who wink when they pull a trigger, and form a line like a hoop pole. The dependence we place on these men spills the best blood of the country."

The surgeon listened with amazement. It was not the matter, but the manner that surprised him. The trooper had uniformly exhibited, on the eve of battle, an animation, and an eagerness to engage, that was directly at variance with the admirable coolness of his manner at other times. But now there was a despondency in the tones of his voice, and a listlessness in his air, that was entirely different. The operator hesitated a moment, to reflect in what manner he could render this change of service in furthering his favorite system available, and then continued :

"It would be wise, John, to advise that colonel to keep at long shot; a spent shot will disable——"

"No!" exclaimed the trooper, impatiently; "let the rascals singe their whiskers at the muzzles of the British muskets, if they can be driven there. But, enough of them. Archibald, do you deem that moon to be a world like this, containing creatures like ourselves?"

"Nothing more probable, dear John; we know its size, and, reasoning from analogy, may easily conjecture its use. Whether or not its inhabitants have attained to that perfection in the sciences which we have acquired, must depend greatly on the state of its society, and in some measure upon its physical influences."

"I care nothing about their learning, Archibald; but 'tis a wonderful power that can create such worlds, and control them in their wanderings. I know not why, but there is a feeling of melancholy excited within me as I gaze on that body of light, shaded as it is by your fancied sea and land. It seems to be the resting-place of departed spirits."

"Take a drop, darling," said Betty, raising her head once more, and proffering her own bottle; "'tis the night damp that chills the blood—and then the talk with the cursed militia is no good for a fiery temper. Take a drop, darling, and ye'll sleep till the morning. I fed Roanoke myself, for I thought ye might need hard riding the morrow."

"'Tis a glorious heaven to look upon," continued the trooper, in the same tone,

disregarding the offer of Betty, "and 'tis a thousand pities that such worms as men should let their vile passions deface such goodly work."

"You speak the truth, dear John; there is room for all to live and enjoy themselves in peace, if each could be satisfied with his own. Still, war has its advantages; it particularly promotes the knowledge of surgery; and——"

"There is a star," continued Lawton, still bent on his own ideas, "struggling to glitter through a few driving clouds; perhaps that too is a world, and contains its creatures endowed with reason like ourselves; think you that they know of war and bloodshed?"

"If I might be so bold," said Sergeant Hollister, mechanically raising his hand to his cap, "'tis mentioned in the good book, that the Lord made the sun to stand still while Joshua was charging the enemy, in order, sir, as I suppose, that they might have daylight to turn their flank, or perhaps make a feint in the rear, or some such maneuver. Now, if the Lord would lend them a hand, fighting cannot be sinful. I have often been nonplussed, though, to find that they used them chariots instead of heavy dragoons, who are, in all comparison, better to break a line of infantry, and who, for the matter of that, could turn such wheel carriages, and, getting in the rear, play the very devil with them, horse and all."

"It is because you do not understand the construction of those ancient vehicles, Sergeant Hollister, that you judge of them so erroneously," said the surgeon. "They were armed with sharp weapons that protruded from their wheels, and which broke up the columns of foot, like dismembered particles of matter. I doubt not, if similar instruments were affixed to the cart of Mrs. Flanagan, that great confusion might be carried into the ranks of the enemy thereby, this very day."

"It's but little that the mare would go, and the rig'lars firing at her," grumbled Betty, from under her blanket; "when we got the plunder, the time we drove them through the Jarseys, it was I had to back the baste up to the dead; for the

divil the foot would she move, forenent the fring, wid her eyes open. Roanoke and Captain Jack are good enough for the red-coats, letting alone myself and the mare."

A long roll of the drums, from the hill occupied by the British, announced that they were on the alert; and a corresponding signal was immediately heard from the Americans. The bugle of the Virginians struck up its martial tones; and in a few moments both the hills, the one held by the royal troops, and the other by their enemies, were alive with armed men. Day had begun to dawn, and preparations were making by both parties to give and to receive the attack. In numbers the Americans had greatly the advantage; but in discipline and equipments the superiority was entirely with their enemies. The arrangement for the battle was brief, and by the time the sun had risen the militia moved forward.

The ground did not admit of the movements of horse; and the only duty that could be assigned to the dragoons was to watch the moment of victory, and endeavor to improve the success to the utmost. Lawton soon got his warriors into the saddle; and leaving them to the charge of Hollister, he rode himself along the line of foot, who, in varied dresses, and imperfectly armed, were found in a shape that in some degree resembled a martial array. A scornful smile lowered about the lip of the trooper as he guided Roanoke with a skillful hand through the windings of their ranks; and when the word was given to march, he turned the flank of the regiment, and followed close in the rear. The Americans had to descend into a little hollow, and rise a hill on its opposite side, to approach the enemy.

The descent was made with tolerable steadiness, until near the foot of the hill, when the royal troops advanced in a beautiful line, with their flanks protected by the formation of the ground. The appearance of the British drew a fire from the militia, which was given with good effect, and for a moment staggered the regulars. But they were rallied by their officers, and threw in volley after volley with great

steadiness. For a short time the fire was warm and destructive, until the English advanced with the bayonet. This assault the militia had not sufficient discipline to withstand. Their line wavered, then paused, and finally broke into companies and fragments of companies, keeping up at the same time a scattering and desultory fire.

Lawton witnessed these operations in silence, nor did he open his mouth until the field was covered with parties of the flying Americans. Then, indeed, he seemed stung with the disgrace thus heaped upon the arms of his country. Spurring Roanoke along the side of the hill, he called to the fugitives, in all the strength of his powerful voice. He pointed to the enemy, and assured his countrymen that they had mistaken the way. There was such a mixture of indifference and irony in his exhortations that a few paused in surprise—more joined them, until, roused by the example of the trooper, and stimulated by their own spirit, they demanded to be led against their foe once more.

"Come on, then, my brave friends!" shouted the trooper, turning his horse's head toward the British line, one flank of which was very near him; "come on, and hold your fire until it will scorch their eyebrows."

The men sprang forward, and followed his example, neither giving nor receiving a fire until they had come within a very short distance of the enemy. An English sergeant, who had been concealed by a rock, enraged with the audacity of the officer who thus dared their arms, stepped from behind his cover, and advancing within a few yards of the trooper, leveled his musket:

"Fire, and you die!" cried Lawton, spurring his charger, which leaped forward at the instant. The action and the tone of his voice shook the nerves of the Englishman, who drew his trigger with an uncertain aim. Roanoke sprang with all his feet from the earth, and plunging, fell headlong and lifeless at the feet of his destroyer. Lawton kept his feet, standing face to face with his enemy.

The latter presented his bayonet, and made a desperate thrust at the trooper's heart. The steel of their weapons emitted sparks of fire, and the bayonet flew fifty feet in the air. At the next moment its owner lay a quivering corpse.

"Come on!" shouted the trooper, as a body of English appeared on a rock, and threw in a close fire; "come on!" he repeated, and brandished his saber fiercely. Then his gigantic form fell backward, like a majestic pine yielding to the ax; but still, as he slowly fell, he continued to wield his saber, and once more the deep tone of his voice was heard uttering, "Come on!"

The advancing Americans paused aghast, and turning, they abandoned the field to the royal troops.

It was neither the intention nor the policy of the English commander to pursue his success, for he well knew that strong parties of the Americans would soon arrive; accordingly, he only tarried to collect his wounded, and, forming in a square, he commenced his retreat toward the shipping. Within twenty minutes of the fall of Lawton, the ground was deserted by both the English and Americans.

When the inhabitants of the country were called upon to enter the field, they were necessarily attended by such surgical advisers as were furnished by the low state of the profession in the interior at that day. Dr. Sitgreaves entertained quite as profound a contempt for the medical attendants of the militia as the captain did of the troops themselves. He wandered, therefore, around the field, casting many a glance of disapprobation at the slight operations that came under his eye; but when, among the flying troops, he found that his comrade and friend was nowhere to be seen, he hastened back to the spot at which Hollister was posted, to inquire if the trooper had returned. Of course, the answer was in the negative. Filled with a thousand uneasy conjectures, the surgeon, without regarding, or indeed without at all reflecting upon any dangers that might lie in his way, strode over the ground at an enormous rate, to the point where he knew the

final struggle had been. Once before, the surgeon had rescued his friend from death in a similar situation; and he felt a secret joy in his own conscious skill, as he perceived Betty Flanagan seated on the ground, holding in her lap the head of a man whose size and dress he knew could belong only to the trooper. As he approached the spot, the surgeon became alarmed at the aspect of the washerwoman. Her little black bonnet was thrown aside, and her hair, which was already streaked with gray, hung around her face in disorder.

"John! dear John!" said the doctor tenderly, as he bent and laid his hand upon the senseless wrist of the trooper from which it recoiled with an intuitive knowledge of his fate; "John! dear John! where are you hurt?—can I help you?"

"Yee talk to the senseless clay," said Betty, rocking her body, and unconsciously playing with the raven ringlets of the trooper's hair; "it's no more will he hear, and it's but little will he mind yee'r probes and yee'r med'cines. Och hone, och hone!—and where will be the liberty now? or who will there be to fight the battle or gain the day?"

"John!" repeated the surgeon, still unwilling to believe the evidence of his unerring senses, "dear John, speak to me; say what you will, that you do but speak. Oh, God! he is dead; would that I had died with him!"

"There is but little use in living and fighting now," said Betty; "both him and the baste! see, there is the poor cratur, and here is the master! I fed the horse with my own hands, the day; and the last male that *he* ate was of my own cooking. Och hone! och hone!—that Captain Jack should live to be killed by the rig'lars!"

"John, my dear John!" said the surgeon, with convulsive sobs, "thy hour has come, and many a more prudent man survives thee; but none better, nor braver. Oh John! thou wert to me a kind friend, and very dear; it is unphilosophical to grieve; but for thee, John, I must weep, even in bitterness of heart!"

The doctor buried his face in his hands,

and for several minutes sat yielding to an ungovernable burst of sorrow; while the washerwoman gave vent to her grief in words, moving her body in a kind of writhing, and playing with different parts of her favorite's dress with her fingers.

"And who'll be there to encourage the boys now?" she said. "Oh! Captain Jack! Captain Jack! ye was the sowl of the troop, and it was but little we knowed of the danger, and yee fighting. Och! he was no maly mouth'd, that quarreled wid a widowed woman for the matter of a burn in the mate, or the want of a breakfast. Taste a drop, darling, and it may be 'twill revive yee. Och! and he'll niver taste agin; here's the doctor, honey, him yee used to blarney wid, wapeing as if the poor sowl would die for yee. Och! he's gone, he's gone; and the liberty is gone wid him."

A thundering sound of horses' feet came rolling along the road which led near the place where Lawton lay, and directly the whole body of Virginians appeared, with Dunwoodie at their head. The news of the captain's fate had reached him; for the instant that he saw the body he halted the squadron, and dismounting, approached the spot. The countenance of Lawton was not in the least distorted, but the angry frown which had lowered over his brow during the battle was fixed even in death. His frame was composed, and stretched as in sleep. Dunwoodie took hold of his hand, and gazed a moment in silence; his own dark eye kindled, and the paleness which had overspread his features was succeeded by a spot of deep red in either cheek.

"With his own sword will I avenge him!" he cried, endeavoring to take the weapon from the hands of Lawton; but the grasp resisted his utmost strength. "It shall be buried with him. Sitgreaves, take care of our friend while I revenge his death."

The major hastened back to his charger, and led the way in pursuit of the enemy.

While Dunwoodie had been thus engaged, the body of Lawton lay in open view of the whole squadron. He was a universal favorite, and the sight inflamed

the men to the utmost; neither officers nor soldiers possessed that coolness which is necessary to insure success in military operations, but they spurred ardently after their enemies, burning with a wish for vengeance.

The English were formed in a hollow square, which contained their wounded, who were far from numerous, and were marching steadily across a very uneven country as the dragoons approached. The horse charged in column, and were led by Dunwoodie, who, burning with revenge, thought to ride through their ranks, and scatter them at a blow. But the enemy knew their own strength too well, and, standing firm, they received the charge on the points of their bayonets. The horses of the Virginians recoiled, and the rear rank of the foot throwing in a close fire, the major, with a few men, fell. The English continued their retreat the moment they were extricated from their assailants; and Dunwoodie, who was severely, but not dangerously wounded, recalled his men from further attempts which, in that stony country, must necessarily be fruitless.

A sad duty remained to be fulfilled. The dragoons retired slowly through the hills, conveying their wounded commander and the body of Lawton. The latter they interred under the ramparts of one of the Highland forts, and the former they consigned to the tender care of his afflicted bride.

Many weeks were gone before the major was restored to sufficient strength to be removed. During those weeks, how often did he bless the moment that gave him a right to the services of his beautiful nurse! She hung round his couch with fond attention; administered with her own hands every prescription of the indefatigable Sitgreaves, and grew each hour in the affections and esteem of her husband. An order from Washington soon sent the troops into winter-quarters, and permission was given to Dunwoodie to repair to his own plantation, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, in order to complete the restoration of his health. Captain Singleton made one of the party; and the whole

family retired from the active scenes of the war to the ease and plenty of the major's own estate. Before leaving Fishkill, however, letters were conveyed to them, through an unknown hand, acquainting them with Henry's safety and good health; and also that Colonel Wellmere had left the continent for his native island, lowered in the estimation of every honest man in the royal army.

It was a happy winter for Dunwoodie, and smiles once more began to play around the lovely mouth of Frances.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Midst furs, and silks, and jewels' sheen,
He stood, in simple Lincoln green,
The center of the glittering ring;
And Snowdon's knight is Scotland's king."

—LADY OF THE LAKE.

THE commencement of the following year was passed, on the part of the Americans, in making great preparations, in conjunction with their allies, to bring the war to a close. In the south, Greene and Rawdon made a bloody campaign, that was highly honorable to the troops of the latter, but which, by terminating entirely to the advantage of the former proved him to be the better general of the two.

New York was the point that was threatened by the allied armies; and Washington, by exciting a constant apprehension for the safety of that city, preventing such reinforcements from being sent to Cornwallis as would have enabled him to improve his success.

At length, as autumn approached, every indication was given that the final moment had arrived.

The French forces drew near to the royal lines, passing through the Neutral Ground, and threatened an attack in the direction of Kingsbridge, while large bodies of Americans were acting in concert. By hovering around the British posts, and drawing nigh in the Jerseys, they seemed to threaten the royal forces from that quarter also. The preparations partook of the nature of both a siege and a storm. But Sir Henry Clinton, in the possession of intercepted letters from

Washington, rested securely within his lines and cautiously disregarded the solicitations of Cornwallis for succor.

It was at the close of a stormy day in the month of September that a large assemblage of officers was collected near the door of a building that was situated in the heart of the American troops, who held the Jerseys. The age, the dress, and the dignity of deportment of most of these warriors indicated them to be of high rank; but to one in particular was paid a deference and obedience that announced him to be of the highest. His dress was plain, but it bore the usual military distinctions of command. He was mounted on a noble animal, of a deep bay; and a group of young men, in gayer attire, evidently awaited his pleasure and did his bidding. Many a hat was lifted as its owner addressed this officer; and when he spoke, a profound attention, exceeding the respect of mere professional etiquette, was exhibited on every countenance. At length the general raised his own hat and bowed gravely to all around him. The salute was returned, and the party dispersed, leaving the officer without a single attendant, except his body-servants and one aide-de-camp. Dismounting, he stepped back a few paces, and for a moment viewed the condition of his horse with the eye of one who well understood the animal, and then, casting a brief but expressive glance at his aide, he retired into the building, followed by that gentleman.

On entering an apartment that was apparently fitted for his reception, he took a seat, and continued for a long time in a thoughtful attitude, like one in the habit of communing much with himself. During this silence, the aide-de-camp stood in expectation of his orders. At length the general raised his eyes, and spoke in those low, placid tones that seemed natural to him.

"Has the man whom I wished to see arrived, sir?"

"He waits the pleasure of your excellency."

"I will receive him here, and alone, if you please."

The aide bowed and withdrew. In a few minutes the door again opened, and a figure, gliding into the apartment, stood modestly at a distance from the general; without speaking. His entrance was unheard by the officer, who sat gazing at the fire, still absorbed in his own meditations. Several minutes passed, when he spoke to himself in an undertone :

"To-morrow we must raise the curtain, and expose our plans. May Heaven prosper them !"

A slight movement made by the stranger caught his ear, and he turned his head and saw that he was not alone. He pointed silently to the fire, toward which the figure advanced, although the multitude of his garments, which seemed more calculated for disguise than comfort, rendered its warmth unnecessary. A second mild and courteous gesture motioned to a vacant chair, but the stranger refused it with a modest acknowledgment. Another pause followed, and continued for some time. At length the officer arose, and opening a desk that was laid upon the table near which he sat, took from it a small, but apparently heavy bag.

"Harvey Birch," he said, turning to the stranger, "the time has arrived when our connection must cease; henceforth and forever we must be strangers."

The peddler dropped the folds of the great-coat that concealed his features, and gazed for a moment earnestly at the face of the speaker; then dropping his head upon his bosom, he said, meekly :

"If it be your excellency's pleasure."

"It is necessary. Since I have filled the station which I now hold, it has become my duty to know many men, who, like yourself, have been my instruments in procuring intelligence. You, have I trusted more than all; I early saw in you a regard to truth and principles that, I am pleased to say, has never deceived me—you alone know my secret agents in the city, and on your fidelity depend, not only their fortunes, but their lives."

He paused, as if to reflect, in order that full justice might be done to the peddler, and then continued :

"I believe you are one of the very few

that I have employed who have acted faithfully to our cause; and, while you have passed as a spy of the enemy, have never given intelligence that you were not permitted to divulge. To me, and to me only of all the world, you seem to have acted with a strong attachment to the liberties of America."

During this address, Harvey gradually raised his head from his bosom, until it reached the highest point of elevation; a faint tinge gathered to his cheeks, and, as the officer concluded, it was diffused over his whole countenance in a deep glow, while he stood proudly swelling with his emotions, but with eyes that modestly sought the feet of the speaker.

"It is now my duty to pay you for these services; hitherto you have postponed receiving your reward, and the debt has become a heavy one. I wish not to undervalue your dangers; here are a hundred doubloons; you will remember the poverty of our country, and attribute to it the smallness of your pay."

The peddler raised his eyes to the countenance of the speaker; but, as the other held forth the money, he moved back, as if refusing the bag.

"It is not much for your services and risks, I acknowledge," continued the general, "but it is all that I have to offer; at the end of the campaign it may be in my power to increase it."

"Does your excellency think that I have exposed my life and blasted my character for money?"

"If not for money, what then?"

"What has brought your excellency into the field? For what do you daily and hourly expose your precious life to battle and the halter? What is there about me to mourn, when such men as you risk their all for our country? No—no—no—not a dollar of your gold will I touch; poor America has need of it all!"

The bag dropped from the hand of the officer, and fell at the feet of the peddler, where it lay neglected during the remainder of the interview. The officer looked steadily at the face of his companion, and continued :

"There are many motives which might

govern me, that to you are unknown. Our situations are different; I am known as the leader of armies, but you must descend into the grave with the reputation of a foe to your native land. Remember that the veil which conceals your true character cannot be raised in years—perhaps never.”

Birch again lowered his face, but there was no yielding of the soul in the movement.

“You will soon be old; the prime of your days is already past; what have you to subsist on?”

“These!” said the peddler, stretching forth his hands, that were already embrowned with toil.

“But those may fail you; take enough to secure a support to your age. Remember your risks and cares. I have told you that the characters of men who are much esteemed in life depend on your secrecy: what pledge can I give them of your fidelity?”

“Tell them,” said Birch, advancing, and unconsciously resting one foot on the bag, “tell them that I would not take the gold!”

The composed features of the officer relaxed into a smile of benevolence, and he grasped the hand of the peddler firmly.

“Now, indeed, I know you; and although the same reasons which have hitherto compelled me to expose your valuable life will still exist, and prevent my openly asserting your character, in private I can always be your friend; fail not to apply to me when in want or suffering, and so long as God giveth to me, so long will I freely share with a man who feels so nobly and acts so well. If sickness or want should ever assail you, and peace once more smile upon our efforts, seek the gates of him whom you have so often met as Harper, and he will not blush to acknowledge you in his true character.”

“It is little that I need in this life,” said Harvey; “so long as God gives me health and honest industry, I can never want in this country; but to know that your excellency is my friend is a blessing that I prize more than all the gold of England’s treasury.”

The officer stood for a few moments in the attitude of intense thought. He then drew to him the desk, and wrote a few lines on a piece of paper, and gave it to the peddler.

“That Providence destines this country to some great and glorious fate I must believe, while I witness the patriotism that pervades the bosoms of her lowest citizens,” he said. “It must be dreadful to a mind like yours to descend into the grave branded as a foe to liberty; but you already know the lives that would be sacrificed should your real character be revealed. It is impossible to do you justice now, but I fearlessly intrust you with this certificate; should we never meet again, it may be serviceable to your children.”

“Children!” exclaimed the peddler, “can I give to a family the infamy of my name?”

The officer gazed at the strong emotion he exhibited with pain, and he made a slight movement toward the gold; but it was arrested by the expression of his companion’s face. Harvey saw the intention, and shook his head as he continued, more mildly:

“It is, indeed, a treasure that your excellency gives me; it is safe too. There are men living who could say that my life was nothing to me, compared to your secrets. The paper that I told you was lost I swallowed when taken last by the Virginians. It was the only time I ever deceived your excellency, and it shall be the last; yes, this is, indeed, a treasure to me; perhaps,” he continued, with a melancholy smile, “it may be known after my death who was my friend; but if it should not, there are none to grieve for me.”

“Remember,” said the officer, with strong emotion, “that in me you will always have a secret friend; but openly I cannot know you.”

“I know it, I know it,” said Birch; “I knew it when I took the service. ’Tis probably the last time that I shall ever see your excellency. May God pour down his choicest blessings on your head!” He paused, and moved toward the door. The officer followed him with eyes that ex-

pressed deep interest. Once more the peddler turned, and seemed to gaze on the placid but commanding features of the general with regret and reverence, and then, bowing low, he withdrew.

The armies of America and France were led by their illustrious commander against the enemy under Cornwallis, and terminated a campaign in triumph that had commenced in difficulties. Great Britain soon after became disgusted with the war; and the independence of the States was acknowledged.

As years rolled by, it became a subject of pride among the different actors in the war, and their descendants, to boast of their efforts in the cause which had confessedly heaped so many blessings upon their country; but the name of Harvey Birch died away among the multitude of agents who were thought to have labored in secret against the rights of their countrymen. His image, however, was often present to the mind of the powerful chief, who alone knew his true character; and several times did he cause secret inquiries to be made into the other's fate, one of which only resulted in any success. By this he learned that a peddler of a different name, but similar appearance, was toiling through the new settlements that were springing up in every direction, and that he was struggling with the advance of years and apparent poverty. Death prevented further inquiries on the part of the officer, and a long period passed before he was again heard of.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood—
Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest;
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood."
—GRAY.

It was thirty-three years after the interview which we have just related that an American army was once more arrayed against the troops of England; but the scene was transferred from the banks of the Hudson to those of the Niagara.

The body of Washington had long lain mouldering in the tomb; but as time was fast obliterating the slight impressions of political enmity or personal envy, his name was hourly receiving new luster, and his worth and integrity each moment became more visible, not only to his countrymen, but to the world. He was already the acknowledged hero of an age of reason and truth; and many a young heart among those who formed the pride of our army in 1814 was glowing with the recollection of the one great name of America, and inwardly beating with the sanguine expectation of emulating, in some degree, its renown. In no one were these virtuous hopes more vivid than in the bosom of a young officer who stood on the table rock, contemplating the great cataract, on the evening of July 25th of that bloody year.

The person of this youth was tall and finely molded, indicating a just proportion between strength and activity; his deep black eyes were of a searching and dazzling brightness. At times, as they gazed upon the flood of waters that rushed tumultuously at his feet, there was a stern and daring look that flashed from them, which denoted the ardor of an enthusiast. But this proud expression was softened by the lines of a mouth around which there played a suppressed archness, that partook of feminine beauty. His hair shone in the setting sun like ringlets of gold, as the air from the falls gently moved the rich curls from a forehead whose whiteness showed that exposure and heat alone had given their darker hue to a face glowing with health. There was another officer standing by the side of this favored youth; and both seemed, by the interest they betrayed, to be gazing for the first time at the wonder of the western world. A profound silence was observed by each, until the companion of the officer that we have described, suddenly started, and pointing eagerly with his sword into the abyss beneath, exclaimed:

"See! Wharton, there is a man crossing in the very eddies of the cataract, and in a skiff no bigger than an egg-shell."

"He has a knapsack—it is probably a

soldier," returned the other. "Let us meet him at the ladder, Mason, and learn his tidings."

Some time was expended in reaching the spot where the adventurer was intercepted. Contrary to the expectations of the young soldiers, he proved to be a man far advanced in life, and evidently no follower of the camp. His years might be seventy, and they were indicated more by the thin hairs of silver that lay scattered over his wrinkled brow than by any apparent failure of his system. His frame was meager and bent; but it was the attitude of habit, for his sinews were strung with the toil of half a century. His dress was mean, and manifested the economy of its owner by the number and nature of its repairs. On his back was a scantily furnished pack, that had led to the mistake in his profession. A few words of salutation, and, on the part of the young men, of surprise, that one so aged should venture so near the whirlpools of the cataract, were exchanged; when the old man inquired, with a voice that began to manifest the tremor of age, the news from the contending armies.

"We whipped the red-coats here the other day, among the grass on the Chipewewa plains," said the one who was called Mason; "since when, we have been playing hide-and-go-seek with the ships: but we are now marching back from where we started, shaking our heads, and as surly as the devil."

"Perhaps you have a son among the soldiers," said his companion, with a milder demeanor, and an air of kindness; "if so, tell me his name and regiment, and I will take you to him."

The old man shook his head, and, passing his hand over his silver locks, with an air of meek resignation, he answered:

"No; I am alone in the world!"

"You should have added, Captain Dunwoodie," cried his careless comrade, "if you could find either; for nearly half our army has marched down the road, and may be, by this time, under the walls of Fort George, for anything that we know to the contrary."

The old man stopped suddenly, and

looked earnestly from one of his companions to the other; the action being observed by the soldiers, they paused also.

"Did I hear right?" the stranger uttered, raising his hand to screen his eyes from the rays of the setting sun; "what did he call you?"

"My name is Wharton Dunwoodie," replied the youth, smiling.

The stranger motioned silently for him to remove his hat, which the youth did accordingly, and his fair hair blew aside like curls of silk, and opened the whole of his ingenuous countenance to the inspection of the other.

"'Tis like our native land!" exclaimed the old man, with vehemence, "improving with time—God has blessed both."

"Why do you stare thus, Lieutenant Mason?" cried Captain Dunwoodie, laughing a little; "you show more astonishment than when you saw the falls."

"Oh, the falls! they are a thing to be looked at on a moonshiny night, by your aunt Sarah and that gay old bachelor, Colonel Singleton; but a fellow like myself never shows surprise, unless it may be at such a touch as this."

The extraordinary vehemence of the stranger's manner had passed away as suddenly as it was exhibited, but he listened to this speech with deep interest, while Dunwoodie replied, a little gravely:

"Come, come, Tom, no jokes about my good aunt, I beg; she is kindness itself; and I have heard it whispered that her youth was not altogether happy."

"Why, as to rumor," said Mason, "there goes one in Accomac, that Colonel Singleton offers himself to her regularly every Valentine's day; and there are some who add, that your old great-aunt helps his suit."

"Aunt Jeannette!" said Dunwoodie, laughing; "dear good soul, she thinks but little of marriage in any shape, I believe, since the death of Dr. Sitgreaves. There were some whispers of a courtship between them formerly, but it ended in nothing but civilities, and I suspect that the whole story arises from the intimacy of Colonel Singleton and my father."

"I know all that, of course; but you

must not tell me that the particular prim bachelor goes so often to General Dunwoodie's plantation merely for the sake of talking old soldier with your father. The last time I was there that yellow, sharp-nosed house-keeper of your mother's took me into the pantry, and said that the colonel was no despicable match, as she called it, and how the sale of his plantation in Georgia had brought him—oh, Lord! I don't know how much."

"Quite likely," returned the captain; "Katy Haynes is no bad calculator."

They had stopped during this conversation, in uncertainty whether their new companion was to be left or not.

The old man listened to each word as it was uttered with the most intense interest; but, toward the conclusion of the dialogue the earnest attention of his countenance changed to a kind of inward smile. He shook his head, and, passing his hand over his forehead, seemed to be thinking of other times. Mason paid but little attention to the expression of his features, and continued:

"To me, she is selfishness embodied!"

"Her selfishness does but little harm," returned Dunwoodie. "One of her greatest difficulties is her aversion to the blacks. She says that she never saw but one that she liked."

"And who was he?"

"His name was Cæsar; he was a house-servant of my late grandfather Wharton. You don't remember him, I believe; he died the same year with his master, while we were children. Katy yearly sings his requiem, and, upon my word, I believe he deserved it. I have heard something of his helping my English uncle, as we call General Wharton, in some difficulty that occurred in the old war. My mother always speaks of him with great affection. Both Cæsar and Katy came to Virginia with my mother when she married. My mother was——"

"An angel!" interrupted the old man, in a voice that startled the young soldiers by its abruptness and energy.

"Did you know her?" cried the son, with a glow of pleasure on his cheek.

The reply of the stranger was inter-

rupted by sudden and heavy explosions of artillery, which were immediately followed by continued volleys of small-arms, and in a few minutes the air was filled with the tumult of a warm and well-contested battle.

The two soldiers hastened with precipitation toward the camp, accompanied by their new acquaintance. The excitement and anxiety created by the approaching fight prevented a continuance of the conversation, and the three held their way to the army, making occasional conjectures on the cause of the fire and the probability of a general engagement. During their short and hurried walk, Captain Dunwoodie, however, threw several friendly glances at the old man, who moved over the ground with astonishing energy for his years, for the heart of the youth was warmed by an eulogium on a mother that he adored. In a short time they joined the regiment to which the officers belonged, when the captain, squeezing the stranger's hand, earnestly begged that he would make inquiries after him on the following morning, and that he might see him in his own tent. Here they separated.

Everything in the American camp announced an approaching struggle. At a distance of a few miles, the sound of cannon and musketry was heard above the roar of the cataract. The troops were soon in motion, and a movement made to support the division of the army which was already engaged. Night had set in before the reserve and irregulars reached the foot of Lundy's Lane, a road that diverged from the river and crossed a conical eminence, at no great distance from the Niagara highway. The summit of this hill was crowned with the cannon of the British, and in the flat beneath was the remnant of Scott's gallant brigade, which for a long time had held an unequal contest with distinguished bravery. A new line was interposed, and one column of the Americans directed to charge up the hill parallel to the road. This column took the English in flank, and, bayoneting their artillerists, gained possession of the cannon. They were immediately joined by their comrades, and the enemy was

swept from the hill. But large reinforcements were joining the English general momentarily, and their troops were too brave to rest easy under the defeat. Repeated and bloody charges were made to recover the guns, but in all they were repulsed with slaughter. During the last of these struggles, the ardor of the youthful captain whom we have mentioned urged him to lead his men some distance in advance, to scatter a daring party of the enemy. He succeeded, but in returning to the line, missed his lieutenant from the station that he ought to have occupied. Soon after this repulse, which was the last, orders were given to the shattered troops to return to the camp.

The British were nowhere to be seen, and preparations were made to take in such of the wounded as could be moved. At this moment Wharton Dunwoodie, impelled by affection for his friend, seized a lighted fusee, and taking two of his men, went himself in quest of his body, where he was supposed to have fallen. Mason was found on the side of the hill, seated with great composure, but unable to walk from a fractured leg. Dunwoodie saw and flew to the side of his comrade, exclaiming:

"Ah! dear Tom, I knew I should find you the nearest man to the enemy."

"Softly, softly; handle me tenderly," replied the lieutenant; "there is a brave fellow still nearer than myself, and who he can be I know not. He rushed out of our smoke, near my platoon, to make a prisoner, or some such thing, but, poor fellow, he never came back; there he lies just over the hillock. I have spoken to him several times, but I fancy he is past answering."

Dunwoodie went to the spot, and to his astonishment beheld the aged stranger.


"It is the old man who knew my mother!" cried the youth; "for her sake he shall have honorable burial; lift him, and let him be carried in; his bones shall rest on native soil."

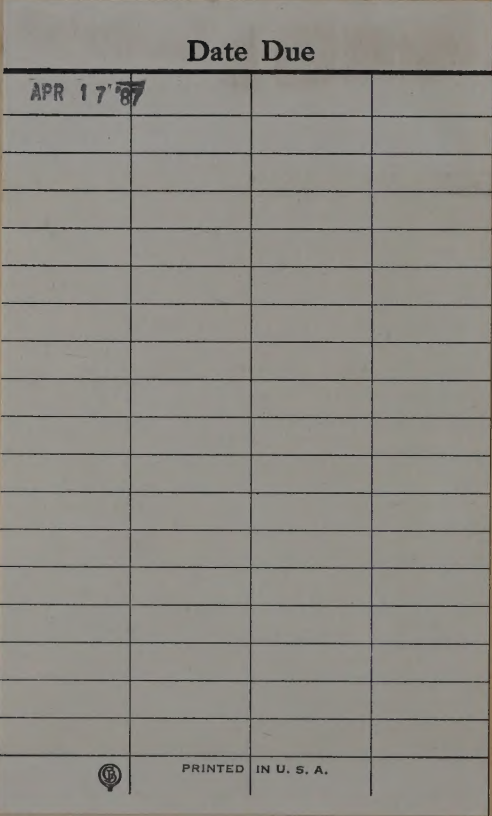
The men approached to obey. He was lying on his back, with his face exposed to the glaring light of the fusee; his eyes were closed, as if in slumber; his lips, sunken with years, were slightly moved from their natural position, but it seemed more like a smile than a convulsion which had caused the change. A soldier's musket lay near him; his hands were pressed upon his breast, and one of them contained a substance that glistened like silver. Dunwoodie stooped, and removing the limbs, perceived the place where the bullet had found a passage to his heart. The subject of his last care was a tin box, through which the fatal lead had gone; and the dying moments of the old man must have passed in drawing it from his bosom. Dunwoodie opened it, and found a paper in which, to his astonishment, he read the following:

"Circumstances of political importance, which involve the lives and fortunes of many, have hitherto kept secret what this paper now reveals. Harvey Birch has for years been a faithful and unrequited servant of his country. Though man does not, may God reward him for his conduct! GEO. WASHINGTON."

It was the SPY OF THE NEUTRAL GROUND, who died as he had lived, devoted to his country, and a martyr to her liberties.

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